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# "THE TEACHING OF TENNYSON."

BY

JOHN OATES.

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THE SORROW OF GOD

*AND OTHER SERMONS*



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Lesson

THE  
SORROW OF GOD  
AND OTHER SERMONS

BY  
JOHN OATES

*North Finchley*

AUTHOR OF "THE TEACHING OF TENNYSON"

"O blessed Lord! how much I need  
Thy light to guide me on my way!  
So many hands, that, without heed,  
Still touch Thy wounds, and make them bleed!  
So many feet, that, day by day,  
Still wander from Thy fold astray!  
Unless Thou fill me with Thy light,  
I cannot lead Thy flock aright;  
Nor, without Thy support, can bear  
The burden of so great a care."

\* \* \* \* \*

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To  
MY SISTER  
AND  
MY BROTHERS.

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"WHERESOEVER YOU ARE, MY HEART SHALL TRULY LOVE YOU."



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## I.

### THE SORROW OF GOD.

“For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”—HEBREWS iv. 15.

**I**T is known that the natures with the keenest sensibility are the highest in the scale of existence, and when that sensibility gets touched into quick sympathy, it is not only the highest, but the divinest and most human too. Not to be “touched” is to be low down in the scale, and to give practical proof that the stuff of which we are made is taken from some coarse fabric in the loom of nature. Now, our Lord stands on the heights of humanity—the one perfect life. He could not be perfect without sensibility and sympathy ; but it was the experience gained in suffering that perfected His character and made it possible for Him to show us how the God-nature is “touched.” It was the God-nature trying to get itself expressed ; and, because it is always, sympathetically, the suffering nature, it could only get itself clearly manifested through suffering. The high-priestly character

belongs to the Godhead. There has always been the atoning element, and so Christ, in the Apocalypse, is seen as the "Lamb slain from the *foundation of the world*." The cross of Christ visibly expressed to men what was always in the Godhead.

I want, then, to bring out this truth.

I. THE SUFFERING OF CHRIST WAS NECESSARY  
TO REVEAL THE SORROW OF GOD.

A primal truth in the Revelation often lost sight of is, that the Son came to show us the Father, what the Father is, and how the Father feels. It is true that grace has its reserves, and veils the deeper meanings of the Atonement; but He Himself tells us that He came to show us the Father.

To grasp that truth is to hold the key of many a door in the house of the Eternal Life. Is not this the first question that man, everywhere and always, is found asking, What is God like? Is not this the voice that cries through the nobler paganism? and did not Philip utter the *undertone* of humanity when he asked, "Show us the Father"? And when Christ made answer, saying, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," did He not imply that the nature of God was then getting itself expressed through Him? And is not that the essence of the doctrine of the "Logos," as taught by St. John, when he declares that the Son is the "likeness" of the Father and the "express



image of His person"? If I may put it so, Christ was the emotional and mental and spiritual "replica" of God.

If, then, I would see something of the Father, I must look at the face framed in the gospels. Looking there, I find a face showing suffering, and though suffering is not always the dominant feature, it is clearly marked. But now the point is, that Christ came to show us God; and if He is the "likeness" of the Father, we are forced to the conclusion that suffering enters into the divine nature, and that the sorrow of God is part of the revelation of God.

Have not men thought, with the old pagans, of the divine nature as incapable of emotion,—calm and pure as the placid lake walled among the hills, over which no wind sends a ruffling breath, and whose crystal depths are still with silent sleep,—of a Deity who never hears a sigh nor a song out of the great human heart? They have thought of a God never knowing pain, but only deep peace. They have shrunk from the thought of infinite perfection suffering, forgetful of the fact that sensibility to suffering marks all the higher organisms, and must be an essential quality of a perfect personality.

So men have missed the consolation of the truth that the divine nature gets "touched" and that God suffers with His suffering children. They have

been ready to believe in the suffering of Jesus, but they have forgotten that the holy Son came to show us the Father, and to let us feel here, in time, the heart of God in eternity. Yet all the while our Lord made it so clear that He paid His visit to earth to let us see a little how God feels.

Then, how do we know of the sorrow of God? Because Christ gives us the "likeness" of God *as love*, and because it is impossible to conceive of love without sorrow, unless the objects loved are all perfect. How often do you, as parents, suffer because of your children! It is your love that suffers. You are wounded—not as a sovereign, whose subjects are rebellious, is wounded in his pride, but as a father, whose son is disobedient, is hurt in his love. The greater the capacity for love the greater will be the sensibility to suffering. Now, God's nature, as shown by Christ, is an infinite capacity for love, and because the objects loved are so very imperfect, His love must suffer for and with them. As long as there is sin in man, and evil in the world, there will be the sorrow of God.

"It is granted to no being to compel Deity to lose the splendid happiness of loving even those who disobey and hate Him. But though the good and the evil may be alike loved, yet the love is not in the two cases of the same quality. The love of the good is complacency, but the love of the evil is pity or compassion. Complacency is twice blessed—gives

the mutual joy that is beatitude, happy being in a happy world ; but compassion feels double pain—pain for him who needs help, and pain for the evil that causes the help to be needed.” \*

It is this aspect of the nature of God which Jesus so clearly reveals in His own sensitive life—not only the love of the “good” which is complacent, but the love of the “evil” which is compassionate. His love not only sees the man in his misery, but the evil which is the cause of the misery, and feels what it sees. How pathetically that gets illustrated in Arthur’s last speech to Guinevere. It is easy to see that Arthur is wounded, not merely in his sovereign self-respect, but in his tenderest love. The queen had wrecked the realm by her perfidy, and brought “red ruin” and “the breaking up of laws,” and Arthur is pained by what sin had wrought in her and in his realm. “In the heart of Arthur pain was lord,” and yet he does not cease to love Guinevere.

“Let no man dream but that I love thee still.  
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,  
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,  
Hereafter in that world where all are pure  
We two may meet before high God.”

That is the love of compassion, taking the pain of another into itself because it is helpless, and that is

\* “Christ in Modern Theology.” Dr. Fairbairn.

the love of God. He suffers because of the evil that has wrecked His fair realm, and because of the rebellion of His children ; and yet, with all the sorrow of His compassion, He says, in Christ—

“ Let no man dream but that I love thee still ! ”

“ He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” True of the divine Son, this is equally true of the holy Father. Nor must we forget that it was the suffering love of Arthur which in the end saved Guinevere. It is surely such love in the God-nature Christ would have us see ; He seems to say, Children of the Father, sinning and struggling, look up into My face. What is it that you see ?—marks of suffering ? Then I am showing you what is in the heart of God—the scars of the pain of His children. With your pain He is “ touched,” and with *their* pain of the nameless, muffled woe ; and by the sorrow of God, working on and in you, your redemption will be wrought. “ I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” Then the time sorrow will become the eternal joy !

Thus Jesus reveals the divine nature, and shows us the real cross in the heart of the Father. Now, *what is the practical value of such a truth ?*

Does it not make all the difference, to the nation and the man, to know that they possess the sympathy of God in their struggle—a sympathy that suffers with them ? Did it not make all the

difference to the Armenian Christians, when hunted and butchered by incarnate Evil, to know that their sorrow was the sorrow of God? Does it not make all the difference to the man with passionate enthusiasm, seeing by swift intuition the agony of the race, and feeling the shock and throe in his own heart, to know that God is not indifferent to the tragedy, but is involved in its suffering? Does it make no difference to you, weeping by the grave of your Lazarus, and stunned by speechless grief, to see the tears dropping down the holy face of Jesus, telling you, by their silent pathos, that the nature of God is ever the tenderest humanity? And thus we begin to realise that the essence of our consolation lies in the self-revelation of Jesus—because God loves He suffers, and because God suffers He sympathises, and because God sympathises He succours. The root of it all is, that “God is Love”; and, seeing it as Browning saw it, we shall know that

“Love greatens and glorifies all things,  
Till God is aglow to the loving heart  
In what was mere earth before.”

That the sorrow of man should be the sorrow of God is most wonderful and almost incredible, only that His love makes it credible. When we see it, we are redeemed; and the consolation of the Redeemer is the sweetest thing in our life.

There is a letter written by Thomas Erskine,—that gentle, pure soul, admitted into secret holy places,—to a friend who had been with Cobden and witnessed his grief on hearing of the death of his only loved son :—

“The idea of a sorrowing God shocks the minds of many. It does not shock mine. I cannot conceive love being without sorrow. I cannot believe that man can give me a sympathy which does not flow into him from God. . . . I need not say to you that this is the view which Christianity gives of God. It sets Jesus Christ before us, sympathising with, and participating in, every form of human suffering, in order that He might draw men up to love and righteousness.” \*

The passage shows that Erskine, with his clear penetration, had grasped the truth of the sorrow of God and the consolation it contains. He is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities”; and, though we often make Him angry by our wilful disobedience, He never forgets that we are His children,—a beautiful truth, which gets so tenderly illustrated in Coventry Patmore’s suggestive poem, “The Toys.”

“My little son, who looked from thoughtful eyes,  
And moved and spoke in quiet grown-up wise,  
Having my law the seventh time disobeyed,

---

\* “Letters of Thomas Erskine.”

I struck him, and dismissed  
With hard words and unvisited—  
His mother, who was patient, being dead.  
Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder sleep,  
I visited his bed,  
But found him slumbering deep,  
With darkened eyelids, and their lashes yet  
From his late sobbing wet :  
And I, with moan,  
Kissing away his tears, left others of my own ;  
For, on a table drawn beside his head,  
He had put, within his reach,  
A box of counters and a red-veined stone,  
A piece of glass abraded by the beach,  
And six or seven shells,  
A bottle with blue bells,  
And two French copper coins, ranged there with careful art,  
To comfort his sad heart.  
So when that night I prayed  
To God, I wept, and said :  
“ Ah, when at last we lie with tranced breath,  
Not vexing Thee in death,  
And Thou rememb’rest of what toys  
We made our joys,  
How weakly understood,  
Thy great commanded good,  
Then, fatherly, not less  
Than I, whom Thou hast moulded from the clay,  
Thou’lt leave Thy wrath and say :  
‘ I will be sorry for their childishness.’ ”

And because God is Father He feels like that.  
“ I will hope and not be afraid ” when I fall asleep.  
And now—

II. THE SUFFERING OF CHRIST WAS NECESSARY  
TO SHOW US THE POSITIVE VALUE OF SUFFERING.

I have been trying to show that suffering is a



divine thing, and, if so, it must have a positive value. It had this value for Christ. He was "made perfect through suffering," and some of the suffering came through temptation. "Christ suffered being tempted." The conflict with evil was as real for Him as for us. He was pure, but only kept His purity by resisting "unto blood," says E. De Pressensé. "He passed through the moral conflict, as we do, with all the perils of freedom. If it is maintained that He could not have yielded to temptation, and that He knew it all along, His humanity remains only an illusion, and He was not really tempted at all. Let us bring Christ down from this cold empyrean, and receive that sublime text, 'He learned obedience,' which signifies that from a state of natural innocence He was to raise Himself to the holiness that follows choice,—a perilous transit, but in it Christ conquered." Character only came to Him, "full orbéd," as the result of discipline. There are certain qualities that make for character,—pity, and patience, and sympathy, and strength,—and these come by way of suffering. Some suffering is the result of sin, but all suffering cannot be so explained; and the only moral explanation seems to be that character, for its completeness, needs the "crucible of pain." It can be shown by reference to many lives that they have been made beautiful with the beauty of God through the school of suffering, and done at last some "work of noble note."

When Reboul was asked by Dumas "What made you a poet?" he replied, "Suffering." And Carlyle, impressed with the positive values of the discipline of pain, wrote: "Thank God for these! Thou hadst need of them: the self in thee needed to be annihilated. By benignant fever-paroxysms life is rooting out the deep-seated disease, and triumphs over death." And in that most beautiful chapter of Mr. J. M. Barrie's, "How my Mother got Her Soft Face," we get the delicate touch of the Angel of Death that turns hardness into softness. Her boy David was thirteen, away from home, when the distressing news came. "I have been told the face of my mother was awful in its calmness, as she set off to get between death and her boy. We trooped with her down the brae to the wooden station, and I think I was envying her the journey in the mysterious waggons. . . . Her ticket was taken, she had bidden us goodbye with that fighting face which I cannot see, and then my father came out of the telegraph-office and said huskily, 'He's gone!' Then we turned very quietly, and went home again up the little brae. But I speak from hearsay no longer; I knew my mother for ever now." The softened face had come which was always to be beautiful, even in death. Such is the value of sanctified suffering to character.

Now, of all religions, the Christian Gospel gives the most satisfactory explanation of the uses of suffering.

In effect, it says, You may make of it a divine thing—the angel of your life, to lead you up to God ; or you may make of it an evil thing, to drag you down to death. Its divine use lies in the chastening and perfecting of character.

Let me take some illustrations from everyday life. A man becomes a drunkard. In body, and mind, and morals, he slowly degenerates, until he is seized by the horror of *delirium tremens*. When restored to sanity, the thought of the horrible pit into which he had fallen becomes to him an agony, and he loathes his bestiality, and cries, “God helping me, I will be a man !” Slowly and painfully the suffering redeems him, when he reaches at last, though scarred, a strength of character he had never known before ; and now he can “rule the province of the brute.”

Or take another : the case of a man with a carnal will, who wills only the pleasures of his own life, who has never a thought of God, and never a throb of spiritual feeling, and never a gleam of something higher. This man lives in the kennel with the hounds of his lower self. But God says, I will bring that man to his senses. I will widen his horizon ! Then the strokes fall : his favourite horse dies, and his yacht gets wrecked, and his investments fail, and, last, his darling child sickens and fades. Now see the man ! Grief claws at his heart, and broods over him, until the agony becomes intolerable. He must find relief. And one day he

says, "God, help me!" Then a divine ray darts into his kennel, and he climbs by it out and up into light. Life for him gathers larger meanings in that widening horizon. He lives no longer for the flesh, but for the spirit. Thus he who was "born mud becomes marble," but not until the fire had swept over him. These are some of the positive values of suffering when it is a scourge to whip us on to God.

In Ibsen's powerful drama, "Brand" speaks to the suffering people thus: "If day after day pass in drowsy peace, at a walking pace, like a funeral, then a man may well think that he is struck out of the Lord's Book. But to you he has shown more favour: He has shed horror into your blood; He has scourged you with the whips of mortal need; what He gave at a dear price He took away again. A living people sucks marrow and strength out of affliction. The dull sight soars like a falcon, and sees fair things from afar."

Thus, if suffering evolve higher virtues, and bring a clearer vision, it is not God's curse, but God's blessing. Then let it work out "the peaceable fruit of righteousness," and soften your hardness into a delicate tenderness, and bring into the fighting face an angel's touch of gentleness. Then see that it lead you into fellowship with that sorrow of God, which is the secret of eternal joy; and though you have an "empty chair" in your home, and sigh for

the "touch of a vanished hand" and the sweet days of the tender past, it will not be all loss, but gain. Christ will come into the "empty place," and you will know Him better because you know the way to Gethsemane, and it is possible that you may find an angel there.

## II.

### THE COMING OF GOD.

"If I had not come and spoken . . ."—ST. JOHN xv. 22.

OUR Lord, in the immediate context, is speaking to His disciples of persecution.

The cause of the persecution lies between the essential difference of the spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world. The world-spirit is from beneath, but the Christ-spirit is from above: the one is animal and the other is spiritual, and the animal vexes the spiritual. It had done so in semi-blindness, because it was without a perfect human exemplar; it had only broken gleams, and not the full-orbed sun. Hence the measure of responsibility was the measure of knowledge. But now the advent of Christ made "excuse" impossible; for He not only fully disclosed the guilt of sin, but disarmed their opposition by revealing the beauty of holiness.

Leaving now the question of the degree of responsibility, I want to speak of the two truths involved in the words "If I had not come and

spoken." They suggest two great truths of the Christian Gospel—

### I. THE COMING OF GOD.

"If I had not come." They are evidently the words of Christ. But what did He mean? Whence did He come? Does He mean that He came naturally, as any other man might come? In a word, was Christ only a man? If so, then we resent His attitude, and say that He was not justified in laying on us the responsibility which the text implies; for no man has authority to bind his teaching in such a way on men as to make its rejection carry penal consequences. It seems evident that our Lord is speaking here out of a deeper consciousness. The words are haunted with the feeling of a far-away time—as of a pre-existence. Whatever your view of the personality of Jesus, you must surely see that His coming was as the coming of God. You have only to ask, Whence did I win my knowledge of the character and the truth of God? to see that you owe primarily to Christ your clearest image of the Father. The words "If I had not come," on His lips, taken in connection with His claim to pre-existence, suggest at once the Incarnation. It is one of the holy mysteries of our religion, and yet we may focus some rays that shall help us at least to see how rational and moral the coming of God was.

I do not now enter upon the philosophy of the



Incarnation, but am anxious to deal with only one point which has been raised by objectors, who argue that the scientific induction of the "uniformity of law" in nature has discredited the doctrine of the Incarnation. Our objector states a fact and then constructs a theory. This is the fact. In effect, he says, Science teaches me the uniformity of nature; the mighty energies which produce her ordered sequences are constant and changeless. If at night I gaze into space, where countless worlds throng in awful depths, I do not fear, because I know that they are held by fixed, invariable "law." If in the early morn I see the dew glistening on the grass, I know that the same energy that rounded the star has shaped the dewdrop. If in the winter I suffer discomfort, I cheer myself with the certainty of the coming summer. Science has demonstrated the uniformity of what we call the "laws of nature." The great forces, silent and unseen, work with mechanical constancy for the order of the universe.

Well, we admit the fact. There is now no longer room to doubt the uniformity of law in the sequences of nature. But while we admit the fact, we need not accept the theory he would build on the fact. He proceeds to state his theory,—With my eyes on the unchanging mechanism of nature, watching the constancy of her seasons, I have formed a conception of God. I conceive of Him from the fixity of His own ordered universe, and I see in Him the counter-

part of nature—changeless and uniform, as the mighty energies He has set in motion. Conceiving Him thus, as incapable of change, the Incarnation becomes incredible! I have met with such an argument.

Now, let us look at it! Is this conception of God true? Does it follow that, because there is uniformity in natural law, there must be a corresponding uniformity in God? Try to answer the question from the analogy of your own parental relations. You have, for the discipline of your home, certain laws, which you have fixed as standards. You never alter them, and you strive, without flinching or deviation, to put them into force. But do these laws prevent the showing of love to your children? Your little girl flings herself into your arms with “Kiss me, father!” Do you gravely reply, “I would like to kiss you, my child; but the laws of our home do not show feeling, and I must not?” No, your heart beats responsive to the fluttering little heart that nestles near you, and you caress the child.

Thus the fallacy of conceiving God in His emotional nature, from the analogy of the fixity of natural law, is apparent. It lies in confounding the laws of matter with the laws of being. Nature has no emotion, but a father has. If God were without a heart, such a conception might be admissible, and with it the Incarnation would be incredible, and all our love and worship but voices

crying into the void. Think of what it means—God *changeless in His emotions*, as the uniformity of nature.

Then we have a Father in heaven who can never express His love! When His children sing a hymn of praise, or when they voice a dumb pain of grief, He, the great Father, can only look down, with stony eyes, and say, "Children, I can show you no love. The laws I made to control the worlds are unfeeling laws, and I must not feel; they show no change, and I must be changeless!" "Ah, then," the children might say, "if Thou, our Father, cannot show us love, if Thou art as the granite, we will go and carve us a god out of the rock, and we will worship and kiss the lips of stone!" Yes, and who in heaven or on earth could blame them? It is true that, morally, God is eternally changeless—the fixed foundation of the moral order of the universe; but if, emotionally, He is incapable of change, and can show us nought of the infinite heart, then, save for the moral order, our hearts might rest as well on the cold bosom of a god carved out of the hills! What a horrible thought it is!—a living god, fixed and expressionless, with lips that never utter speech of love, with eyes that gaze out over the sobbing sea of life without a gleam of pity,—a God ever thinking the same, and feeling the same, and doing the same!

Is that a natural and healthy concept of God?

Does it accord with our ideal even of highest human life? Is it not true, when we think of highest life known to us, that we think of quick sensibility? It is thus we distinguish between the high and the low among organisms. If, then, we think of God as sluggish sensibility, we form the lower conception. We think of One at the centre of the universe, more interested in the machinery of the worlds than in the souls of men,—of One who is untouched by the tragedies played on the stage of the human heart, where the fierce lights of passion blaze. We see a granite throne and a white, passive sublimity called Deity, with hands that never come through darkness to lift weary men and fallen women, and with eyes that never shed a ray of hope over the pathos of our human life!

If that were so, Walt Whitman's daring saying is true, "We are betrayed!"

We have thus considered the objection to the Incarnation based on the uniformity of nature, and we have seen how it confuses material laws with the laws of being, and how, if admitted, it would give us a view of God that would strike terror into our life. We must hold to the personality of God as being the analogue of our own, and then we shall realise that the Incarnation does not contradict any fundamental necessity of thought.

"If it be replied that this is only true of the earlier world, and that in fact it does contradict

our modern notion of the uniformity of law, we answer that, waiving the question of the precise value of that notion, 'the Incarnation' is in reality the most consummate exhibition that we can conceive of God's own obedience to the laws of His creation." \*

Now, further, we may ask, Does Revelation give us any image of God which makes His coming credible and probable? Yes, *and it is in the emotional side of God.*

We have not yet fully realised the significance of the play of feeling which the Revelation ascribes to the personality of God. He is portrayed as wonderfully sensitive. In the scale of holy emotion there is scarcely a feeling not recorded. In the Old Testament we find anger and pleasure and grief and joy ascribed to God; while the New Testament makes still more vivid the emotional quality of God revealing Himself in Christ. But how are we to understand, even in faint degree, the nature of divine feeling? Our own heart is the only way possible to us. Though discordant within, there are broken chords that tell of a perfect music.

We can know only a little how God feels from the way in which we feel at our purest and best. It is said of Carlyle that, when a child, he saved three halfpence, and that one day there came a Shetland beggar to the door with a wounded arm,

\* "Personality, Human and Divine," p. 196. Illingworth.

and the child emptied his cherished treasure into the beggar's hand. Carlyle, recording his emotion, wrote : " The feeling of happiness was most intense. I would give a £100 now to have that feeling for one moment ! " Yes, and may we not reverently say that the feeling of the child who gave was a little like the feeling of God when He empties His cups into the poverty of our life. Or take an illustration drawn from personal experience. I knew of a child who wandered and was lost in an African forest. The excitement was intense ; and the rivers were dragged, and the thickets were searched, but all in vain. On the third day, when hope was gone, a shout came from the heart of the forest, " The child is found ! " There, beneath a spreading tree, wasted with want, lay the lost child. Imagine the feelings of the agonised father as he rushed to the spot, and, clasping the child, cried, " Oh, my God ! " Now, that human father entered faintly into the feeling of the holy Father when He misses His wandering children, or, when finding, He takes them to His heart. That is the portraiture in the Revelation, when it depicts emotion in God ; it is vivid with the glow of holy feeling.

Thus, through our human heart, we may dimly interpret the personality of God. What, then, is the point of the argument ?

This :—Granted that God is like the human father in His love, and that His children are lost, what

then? Why, is it not reasonable and moral and most beautiful that God should come and seek and find His children? If so, then say in what better way—better for us—could God come than the way in which He did come, in Christ? Remember, the Father wants to show us love. You reply, Why not show us love through nature? The answer is, Nature—*i.e.*, the material world—cannot show love. Then why not through a mortal? Because no mortal was pure enough to reveal the holy love of God. Only a person can make known a personal love, but that person, to reveal actually the divine nature, must partake of the nature it reveals, and be sinless. Thus we get the *rationale* of the Incarnation. God, as the loving Father, must find a way of showing His love for His children. But a love so perfect can only be fully expressed in a perfect life on earth. When interpreted, even from our own poor hearts, the coming of God seems not only credible and probable, but the most beautiful thing that God ever did. The heart of the Father is the secret of the Incarnation. In the “Epistle of Karshish” we get that passionately voiced:

“The very God!—Think, Abib; dost thou think?  
So, the All-Great were the All-Loving too:  
So, through the thunder comes a human voice,  
Saying, ‘O heart I made, a heart beats here!  
Face My hands fashioned, see it in Myself!  
Thou hast no power, nor may conceive of Mine!  
But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,  
And thou must love Me who have died for thee.’”

The text suggests—

## II. THE SPEECH OF GOD.

“If I had not come and *spoken*.” The speech of God is the utterance of the thought of God. How, then, has the Almighty expressed His thought? In two ways.

### i. *By a character.*

The character is Christ, who is called the “Word.” Why? Because a word is the utterance of a thought. Without the word the thought remains unexpressed. Christ is thus the “Word” because He is the vehicle of the thought of God. What lay in the silence of the divine mind finds articulation in Christ, and, first, by His character. Assume that He was speechless, and still His character would be the utterance of God. Something is here in Him we find nowhere else—a holiness and a serenity, a passion and a purity, a gentleness and a strength, blending in a great humanity which trembles into divinity. Oh! this sublime character! Whence came it? Why have the ages produced only one Christ? Nature is prolific; she lavishes her gifts with rare generosity. If nature gave us Christ, why only one Christ?—one white soul, one pure mind, one perfect life? Nature never gave Him. She never had the material out of which to weave the tissues of a life so fine. God gave Him, out of the eternal Godhead, because there was no man on earth worthy to reveal the Deity.



The character of Christ is the unveiled image of God. There it stands, far up in heaven—a peak of pure flame, lit by the fire of God, and yet rooted here in the abyss of our sin! We may not reach Him in the height, but we may feel Him in the depth. As He is divinity so also is He humanity. The coming of God in Christ is the coming of the divine humanity. Look at this highest, holiest character. What is its speech? It is a *human* speech. It talks like a great mother's heart. It was seen to take up little children, and embrace them, as if it saw in their pure eyes an image of heaven. It was always young in its love of the fresh, beautiful things. It was simplicity itself when it talked so naturally of flowers and flax and corn and sheep. But while most human in its feeling, ever passing a sympathetic hand over the sickness of life, it would, with the majesty of authority, compel men to the confession of its divinity.

Thus Christ is God humanised. He was essential to the unveiling of the character of Him whom "no man hath seen." Take away Christ and all He has shown us, and what image of God would remain? "The God whom men know outside of Jesus Christ is a poor nebulous thing—an idea, not a reality. He, or rather It, is a film of cloud shaped into a vague form through which you can see the stars." Without Christ we cannot win the

larger thought of God. We cannot shoot our little thought far enough into the infinite. We, who know not the mystery of our own being, how shall we solve the mystery of God? The finite cannot apprehend the infinite, and must wait for the coming of One from heaven. Even the character of Christ is proof of the coming of God. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory."

But God has spoken, not only by the character of Christ, but—

ii. *By His teaching.*

Christ is the speech of God; through His human lips the glad tidings came. What, then, is His essential message? I think the following setting holds the diamond of the teaching of Jesus:—

"God is Love—love which itself is a trinity, the unity of three primitive rays divine. For love, in the one ray or primal colour of it, is benevolence—the giving of self for another's good. And love is also sympathy—the putting self in the place of another, living another's life; the vicariousness of the cross. And love is also self-respect—the unselfish assertion of its own worth, the preservation of its own good in the world. Benevolence, vicariousness, righteousness form the threefold nature of love, which itself is a unity of life. God is Love—which includes all His attributes. 'Love,' insists

Professor Dorner, 'is the power in God over His own omnipotence.' " \*

Such is the speech of God through the lips of Christ. Over against our sin is His awful righteousness demanding satisfaction ; but on the stern face there plays the softening light of holy love finding the "satisfaction" in the altruistic sacrifice of itself. We may bring all our sin with its shame, and all the confusions and apparent contradictions of our life, and lift them up into the play of this light of heavenly love, and win hope for ourselves in penitence and for the world in weariness ; but should we refuse it,—this great truth of the coming of God, and the speech of God in Christ,—we have no more "excuse" for our sin in that we have shut out the light !

It is a wonderfully beautiful Gospel. Christ says, God is a reality ; He is Love, and haunts your life.

". . . He glows above,  
With scarce an intervention presses close  
And palpitatingly, His soul o'er ours."

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\* "The Orthodox Theology of To-day," p. 37. Newman Smyth.

### III.

#### THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY.

"Now I make known unto you, brethren, the Gospel which I preached unto you . . ."—I CORINTHIANS XV. I.

". . . The Gospel of the glory of the blessed God" (R.V.).—  
I TIMOTHY I. II.

IN the first of these texts the Apostle is reminding the Church at Corinth—against certain doubters—that the Gospel is not a myth or a dream, but a reality based on historic facts—the facts being, that Christ died for our sins, and was buried and was raised and appeared to credible witnesses. These are great facts, upon which the Church has built the doctrines of Redemption and Resurrection and a Future Life. Then in the second text the Apostle gives a suggestion which helps to explain not only what the essential Gospel is, but how it became possible. As if standing on the historic facts of the first, he seems to say, It is not only a gospel, but it is the Gospel of something! Of what? The answer itself is a revelation—a theology in a sentence. It is "the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God." We define the Gospel as "good

news," and the etymology is, doubtless, correct. But "good news" of whom and of what? We must get a larger definition in the sweep of this word "glory."

But first—

#### I. THE SOURCE OF THE GOSPEL.

It is certainly the most wonderful thing on earth and the most fascinating. I compare it with the other religions, and, while they are silent, it tells me things about God which I long to know—things which answer and satisfy the clamorous voices within. But men tell me the Gospel is only a beautiful dream of the Church! Then I ask, Who made the Church? Or, when they say, It is only a lovely myth, wrought by poetic souls out of the old-world fancies, I ask, But what of the history of Jesus, and what of the history of the men who loved Him and died for Him? Men do not die for myths. No! the source of such a river as the Gospel must lie in a living reality.

I saw a wonderful river—its waters pure and its volume deep and strong. Wherever the river flowed it left a benediction: the valleys were fruitful, and nature was a living loveliness. On it swept through teeming cities, blessing them with the breath of health and its water of life. I ask, Whence the source of the beneficent river? Does some one say, What you saw was not real; it was only a beautiful dream of the imagination? and another,

It was only a kind of mental *mirage*? Do I hear a third saying, It was a sweet hallucination of a "delicate sensibility"? Then to all these I reply, Look at the results of the river,—wherever it flows it blesses; the roots of trees drink of it and live; cities spring to life on its banks and flourish. Such results do not issue out of nothingness. The river is real, and must have a real source; and one day we found the source—far up the mountains, out of whose heart the river was born, pure as the snow.

Thus the Gospel is a continuous river of spiritual beneficence flowing through the world, producing actual spiritual results; and it is incredible that such results should issue from a dream, or a *mirage*, or a hallucination. It must have an actual living source to produce actual living results. What is that source? St. Paul gives an answer which is most rational, for it best explains all the results. He says the source of the Gospel is the "blessed God." God! Then that is to claim a supernatural origin for the Gospel. Precisely. God alone can account for the Christian ethic. The effects in human character are supernatural, and as the effect must partake of the nature of its cause, the cause must be supernatural. The Gospel is the river of the divine heart.

We thus arrive at the vital truth, which I desire to impress—viz., *that the Christian Gospel was*

*not born on earth of flesh and of blood, but in heaven of spirit and of life.*

Its source is the "blessed God." When the Apostle makes that claim he is only echoing the voice of the Christ. The founder of a religion knows more about his own religion than any one else, and the claim of our Lord for His own religion is, that it is the inspiration of God. "The words which Thou gavest Me I have given unto them, and they received them, and knew of a truth that I came forth from Thee."

Accepting, then, the records as containing at least the substance of the teaching of Jesus, we cannot, with some, say that the Christian Gospel was the creation of human genius, touched by the fire of emotion, or the beautiful hallucination of a delicate sensibility. No! It had its birth in eternity, and is the articulation of God in time. It was not an evolution of man, but is a revelation to man.

This primary fact, now that the theory of evolution is being forced out of the realm of the physical into the spiritual, is apt to be forgotten. Science, doubtless, has demonstrated evolution on its physical side. The ascent to man has come through an almost infinite series; but when we arrive at man we are confronted by this remarkable fact, that, while man is evolved, he himself has never been able to evolve a system of philosophy, or a code of ethics, or a spiritual religion capable of morally

emancipating the world and restoring it to its place in the spiritual order of God. For proof of this we have only to read the pagan philosophies. How weary this sounds ! What an acknowledgment of the failure of the best minds to evolve a satisfying Gospel ! “ We will wait for one, be he a god or an inspired man, to instruct us in our religious duties, and, as Athené says to Diomed, in Homer, ‘ to take away the darkness from our eyes.’ ” There we get the nobler paganism voiced—a sense of utter inability to produce what was so painfully needed. No ! man has never evolved, in all these ages, a religion capable of saving the world from corruption. The natural religions contain valuable ethical precepts ; but they lack the deep sense of sin, and they supply no moving motive to holiness. A divine religion, pulsing with eternal life,—an actual showing of God here in time,—alone could satisfy the reason and the heart of man. Guesses after truth could not satisfy—only truth itself. Now, this is the claim, That in Christ the divine Man came, and that the Gospel He uttered in words and voiced in character was born not of fallible man, but of infallible God. There are many religions, and they are all the evolutions of man ; but there is only one Gospel, and it is the speech of God in Christ. Such is the claim written broadly on the pages of the New Testament and attested by the moral miracles of the Gospel, and by its patient work, in the



history of the world, for purity and peace. The proof of its divine origin lies in its perfect adaptation to the complex life of man. It is "the power of God unto salvation" wherever embraced. Its source is in the heart of eternal love. And because it is of God—a perennial life—*it can never be exhausted*. The dogmas, representing the human element in the making of creeds, may change and weaken, but the Christian Gospel, containing the unchanging elements of the truth and the feeling of God—answering the cry of the human heart—can never be exhausted. The Gospel is more than a "body of truth"—it is a spirit, a life. But even as a body of truth it will never know death. It is a body tenanted by God, and the body is the *expression* of the indwelling spirit. As long as God is, the Gospel will be. Whatever may come and go in the changing years, this truth of God will remain. There will always be for you "the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God."

Note now—

## II. THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL.

I confess that here I want something very definite. I ask to know what is the essential feature of the Gospel? One says, It is a philosophy of life; another, It is a code of ethics, a third, It is a doctrine. All these are vague, and they do not help me; but here the Apostle makes a statement which arrests us with its splendid daring.

We feel the infinite struggling to express itself through the finite. What is the Gospel? Listen! It is "the glory of the blessed God." The glory! I must get some idea of what that is. We have a human way of using this word "glory."

I was down in the vale of Chamounix, and saw a most wonderful sight. Mont Blanc seemed anxious to get away from earth and soar into the heavens. He had on his white crown and his white robes, and the lovely blue sky seemed to welcome him ever higher; and his brother mountains, they were all in white, and they, too, wanted to get into the blue. And as I looked, there came a beautiful unearthly thing. It quivered and gleamed a rosy splendour on the face of the great forms, as if heaven had heard their aspiration and had transfigured them. It was the "after glow," but I said, It is a glory! And yet I was thinking only of the sensation produced. And thus the word "glory" gets narrowed down in our speech to the sensuous.

But I want to know what God means by glory, and how the word is used in the Revelation. We find it early in the sacred records, when Moses asked, "Show me Thy glory," and God said, "I will cause all My goodness to pass before thee"; and *that* was the answer. God's glory is His goodness. And when the Apostle defines the Gospel as the "Gospel of the glory," he surely means the goodness of God.

But what is the goodness? We get the full answer in the later revelation. St. John says of our Lord, "We beheld His glory . . . of the only begotten of *the Father*."

I hope, then, I am right in saying that the "glory of the blessed God" is the goodness of His Fatherhood, and that the Gospel is the showing of such a Father. Its glory lies in the new face of God—the goodness of the Father—which it reveals. "Our Father which art in heaven." The essential feature of the Gospel is the Fatherhood of God. It includes, and it makes possible, all the facts and the truths of historic Christianity. The Father is seen in the Son, God in Christ, and we know now that His glory must be His goodness; and when it tells us that this goodness is the goodness of a father, with holy love, then we say, Yes! that is what I want—a father in heaven. My heart cries for love. I want a god who feels like a father!

But you say, God is the imperial majesty. Yes! Nature reveals *that*. But it is not what my life most deeply craves. I saw His majesty in the sovereignty of those awful mountains. I heard it in the crash of the avalanche. I saw it in the tombs of ice that gaped for their living prey. No! the majesty of the mountains overawed me; and if God were only like the mountains, He might crush me into obedience, but I never could love Him. I know that He is

the August Majesty, the Eternal Sovereign, but He is infinitely more "Our Father which art in heaven."

*Now this is yours*, this "Gospel of the glory of the blessed God,"—blessed or happy, because He is *such* a Father—a real Father—not a beautiful dream, or golden myth, or sweet idea, or "diffused life," but an actual Father, with constituents of personality; he feels towards you and me with the feeling of a holy Fatherhood. We may not always understand the mystery of our pain nor the greater mystery of the struggle of life; but of this we may be sure, that God ever feels like a father, and that He is working for us as only a father can work. The tragedies of human life—the deeds that darken the sun—cannot change the immutable fact that God is Father and that He haunts men with a love that never falters. If you know Him *thus* and can trust and love Him, you have found the secret of the beautiful peace of Christ. His glory is His goodness.

"Yet in the maddening maze of things,  
And tossed by storm and flood,  
To one fixed stake my spirit clings;  
I know that God is good!"

I want you to see the beautiful in God. It may be for others to make His terrible majesty, His unflinching righteousness, His holy Nemesis the

dominant note of their preaching ; but for myself I always seem to hear an inner voice saying, Tell them good news. Let them see a little of My heart. Show them the likeness of the Father. They will love Me sooner when they know Me better ! So I follow that inner voice, and would fain “ make known unto you, brethren, the Gospel . . . of the glory of the blessed God.”

If I could only tell you the half of what Christ would have us see of God as the Father, you would not delay your return to Him. The doctors of a hard theology may have hindered your coming to God, but when you see that He is “ infinite goodness alone ” you will want to come to Him. Oh, believe me, you are a lonely child without God ! You think that you know life, but you know naught worth knowing unless you know God. You think that you are at peace, but there is no peace without God. Never here nor elsewhere can a human soul rest until it has a personal interview and understanding with God, and can say with a filial spirit, “ My Father.”

Now, how has this “ Gospel of the glory ” come to us ? Note—

### III. THE MEDIUM OF THE GOSPEL.

God wanted to show Himself as the Father of man, and God did it in a most beautiful way, and in a way we best understand. God gave us a living image of Himself in Christ, and He said, *That*

is My likeness: My Son is the image of Me; they will reverence My Son. He was "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person." Thus Christ was the medium for the showing of the Father to us. Now in this lies the fascination of the Gospel—*in a person*.

I find that natural religions, while they have an excellent framework of ethics, lack this perfect picture. But I do not want a frame alone,—you may weave round it a garland of roses, if you will; but I want the portrait,—that face I love of the mother or the child with God. Oh, give me the portrait!

The other religions are all ethical frames; but the "Gospel of the glory" puts a face into the frame, and it is Jesus—the face of God revealed! That we might know Him, He took a face like our face, and looked into our eyes with human eyes. This is what Browning, with clear penetration, saw as the greatest and loveliest of the Christian verities. You will recall the passionate lines in the drama of "Saul." David is standing before the king, striving, with melodious harp and voice, to charm away the sadness of Saul, when suddenly, as if swept by some heavenly wind, the chords of his being tremble into a song of the coming Christ and of the God who should come in Him.

“. . . O Saul, it shall be  
A face like My face that receives thee;

A Man like to Me thou shalt love and be  
Loved by, for ever ; a hand like this hand  
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee.  
See, the Christ stand ! ”

The personality of Christ is the portrait of God. What the Son was in time the Father is in eternity. It is the face which the Gospel frames that ever fascinates the poets and the painters, and always brings sweet peace to the man weary of sin. You can never make too much of the spiritual values of the Incarnation. Consider. I, a man, want to get to God, but God eludes me. I cannot grasp the “infinite,” the “absolute” : I grope in an endless mist. I ask what His character is, and how He feels ; and, unless He come in some human way, He is beyond—far and away beyond—my poor thought. God must come into my flesh-home, robe Himself in the mantle of my humanity, and shine *through* it, as sun through clouds, if I am to know His character. Men tell me that God stands revealed in nature. As the earth-spirit in *Faust* says :

“At the whirring loom of Time, unawed,  
I work the living mantle of God ”

Yes ; and the mantle is very beautiful, and when I see it, I feel that the *mind* of the Maker is beautiful, but I want to know ever so much more of the God within the living robe. Is He good ? Is He aught like our best fatherhood, and motherhood ? Will He take my sinful life and cleanse

it in infinite love? Do the wrongs of men pain Him, and is He working for their release?

I hear the "whirring" of the loom and I see the living mantle, but I get no answer to my questions. Nature cannot answer moral questions concerning God. They can only be answered by a person. God is a person, and only a person can show Him to me. Thus Christ is the medium of the Revelation, and naught could be more rational and moral and necessary than the coming of such a Father in such a way. It made God apprehensible by us. Christ, within the limits of the Incarnation, is the showing of the face of God.

Professor Huxley, whom we honour as scientist, once entered the arena of theology, and wrote as if the Gadarene swine were the centre of the Christian Gospel, and as if it all stood or fell with the alleged miracle. But Christ is the eternal miracle of the Gospel. If the Professor had studied the swine less and the Christ more, he would have written differently. How true it is that the scientist, absorbed in the material, often misses the spiritual.

"I have swept the heavens with my telescope, and have not seen God!" said Lalande. Precisely. Because he was looking only for stars; he saw what he searched for.

"And yet there is a higher work than yours,  
To have looked upon the face of the  
Unknown and perfect beauty. . . ."



The face is the face of God in Christ, and "blessed are the eyes that see."

I have read of the legendary ruins of an old-world city, in which there stood, among the crumbling rocks, a lovely statue with veiled face. It was the Goddess of Truth ; and though it was said men longed to see the face, the veil was never lifted. So the face of God was veiled until the coming of Christ, when the veil was drawn, and the glory shone in Him. Only a divine life can adequately reveal the divine. Take away Christ, and the veil falls, and we mortals cannot see the Father. Thus the "Gospel of the glory" is the showing of the "blessed God" in Christ as the Father.

Now, if you will, *He is yours*, and naught can take Him from you—not even the "higher criticism." If you have the Christ you have the Father, and everything in God becomes your property. The acceptance of this Gospel as your rule of faith and life makes you an heir of God. Life will yield you naught richer than Christ, and death will show you no greater glory than the Father in Him.

I pray you, see that you do not miss your share in the "Gospel of the glory of the blessed God."

#### IV.

### THE CONCEALING OF GOD.

"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing."—PROVERBS XXV. 2.

THE proverbs of Solomon are not always maxims of wisdom ; sometimes they are very coarse, and strike into current coin the lower thoughts and deeds of men, but at times they are weighty with spiritual feeling and suggestion. The proverb of the text is remarkable for its clear insight into a great truth. We dwell with delight on the revealing, but we scarcely pause to reflect on the concealing, of God ; and yet what He conceals is necessarily much larger and richer than what He reveals. If the glory of God is seen in His revealing, then what shall be said of His concealing ? The reserves must be greater far than the revelation. The reserves constitute the glory and the mystery of God. As there are star-depths in the sky that baffle us, and we are haunted with the sense of unknown worlds and wonders, so there are vasty deeps in the divine nature in which are veiled glories that eye of man hath not seen, nor ever heart of man conceived. What the visible stars

are to the invisible hosts—the mere outlying sentinels—revelation is to God. Yet how strange it is that men are always protesting against mystery in religion! Why, there is a charm in mystery! and we feel it whenever we realise that there is something we cannot explain. The purest and best minds have always felt it; they have been fascinated by what remained more than by what stood revealed. The poet is an illustration when he finds a flower growing in a cranny of the wall. The flower is a revelation of many things, but the charm for the poet lies in that something concealed.

“Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies,—  
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand.  
Little flower; but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.”

Thus mystery is helpful: it softens us into reverence, and inspires the wonder and worship of the soul; it creates the sense of something richer in reserve. You have felt this when looking on a genuine work of art. Here was a curve and there a shade, or yonder a delicate touch, suggesting “reticence in art” and a reserve of power in the artist; and you felt that the artist was much greater than his art, and what he had revealed of himself was far surpassed by what lay concealed, and you

said, He will do much better—the glory of the artist is not in his picture, but in himself. You felt it again when listening to a great orator, whose eloquence, by its resistless power, commanded your intellect and emotion, and yet all the time you were conscious of reserve force in the orator, and you said, He is not exhausted; he is greater than his oration, and might excel even this! Thus the greater glory of artist and orator lies in what they conceal—in the reserves. Phidias is greater than his work and Demosthenes than his orations. If their art and speech be so sublime, then what of their creative genius? The soul that creates must be greater than the thing created. But now, what are the signs of exhaustion? Why, the using up of what we call “natural resources.” Then we say of the artist, He has not another idea; his star has declined. Or we say of the orator, He repeats himself; his sun has set. They are exhausted, and at that moment they lose their charm for us.

We realise now how true this proverb is when applied to man, that his glory consists rather in what he conceals than in what he reveals; in the powers that lie behind and cannot all get expressed, the one in art or the other in speech. But if the proverb be true of man, it is certainly true of God: “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.”

Let us take two illustrations of this great truth. And, first—

## I. GOD CONCEALED IN NATURE.

Science has done great service in telling us something of the constituents of matter and of the laws which govern matter. Through the microscope, it has revealed worlds of beauty in the infinitely little, and through the telescope, worlds of wonder in the infinitely great; and in all these we have learned how to see the revealings of the divine mind. And yet the glory of God consists rather in what He conceals.

We have thought that the glory of the sun consisted in what he reveals of the beauty and grandeur of our world, and we have not considered that, while in the act of shining he shows us one world, he hides, within the blaze of light, countless systems. The greater glory is veiled in the shining of the sun. Thus, behind the revelation we get of God in nature there lies the infinite reality—the glory concealed. And when we reflect, we see how this must be so. Nature is the limited and local, and God is the limitless and universal. It follows that the infinite cannot be wholly revealed in the finite. God can only show Himself in nature within the limits of nature, and so the glory revealed is only a broken gleam or a stifled splendour. What we get is merely a hint; we do not, even with the aid of science, solve the mystery of God. Some persons seem to think that Science, with her splendid research, has explained everything, and

they say, There is no supernatural ; it is all natural. But true science has never claimed to have explained, even by the philosophy of evolution, all that lies in nature. On the contrary, she admits an "unknown quantity," eluding her keenest search. Mr. Herbert Spencer says, "We are face to face with an inscrutable force." Mr. Darwin affirmed the origin of life to be an insoluble mystery, and Dr. A. Russel Wallace makes this remarkable concession, "All force is probably will-force : force is the product of mind ; the whole universe is not merely dependent on, but actually is, the will of higher intelligences or one supreme intelligence."

Thus Science, through her leaders, distinctly affirms there is much we cannot explain : there is something hidden ! One calls it "force," and another says it is "probably will-force," as force is the product of mind. Now what is this but to postulate the *supernatural in the natural* ?—which is only another way of affirming the truth of the concealing of God—the hiding of His power. Take as an illustration the law of gravitation. You say : Science has explained everything of this wonderful force. We know that it is not confined to our own world, but operates in all worlds. We know also the laws of its attraction, and our astronomers are able to calculate with precision the coming and going of a comet. Yes, that is so ; and yet mystery swathes the force of gravitation.

We have only to ask what an acute mind has already asked—"Whence comes that force? Is it older or younger than the particles of matter in which it acts, or is it coeval with them? Is it something separate from them, or is it part of their very essence? What makes it act as it does? Will it always act thus? Is it connected, and if so, how, with mind and will?"

Science has not answered these questions. We go only a little way, and we touch the fringe of the supernatural. God conceals Himself within the phenomena of gravitation! The mystery ever haunting nature, hidden in every flower, and in the unexplained elements, and in the being of man, is only another name for the mystery of God. He may show us something more, but what He conceals must ever be greater for us than what He reveals. "Force" is everywhere, but who can tell what "force" is? Science needs to be supplemented by Revelation, with its first great word, "In the beginning God." What men call "force" theology defines as the energy of the divine will.

"It leaps to life in grass and flowers,  
Through every grade of being runs;  
While from creation's radiant towers  
Its glory flames in stars and sun."

As a further illustration of the concealing of God in nature, take the following charming description of the New Zealand terraces:—"We could stand on

the brim and gaze, as through an opening in the earth, into an azure infinitely beyond. Down and down, and fainter and softer as they receded, the white crystals proceeded from the rocky walls over the abyss till they seemed to dissolve, not into darkness, but into light. The hue of the water was something which I had never seen and shall never see again on this side of eternity. Not the violet, not the harebell, nearest in its tint to heaven of all nature's flowers, not turquoise, not sapphire, not the unfathomable ether itself, could convey to one who had not looked on it a sense of that supernatural loveliness! Comparison could only spoil such inimitable purity." \*

If the revealing of the "supernatural" was so amazingly beautiful in that transient scene, then what of the concealing? If the gleams were so glorious, then what of the sun? If the outer gate of the palace be a splendour, then what of the palace itself? Thus, what is seen gives only a faint suggestion of the unseen: "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing."

Science, we gratefully acknowledge, has told us a wonderful story, but it is only the alphabet to the literature of God. It is only the shell in which we hear the murmuring music of the ocean, and all the music is vocal with one name—God! Samuel Taylor Coleridge, as he listened to the

\* "Oceana." J. A. Froude.



anthem of the Alps, heard and voiced the sublime harmonies.

“God! let the torrents, like a shout of nations,  
Answer; and let the ice plains echo, God!  
God! Sing, ye meadow-streams, with gladsome voice!  
And they, too, have a voice—yon piles of snow,  
And in their perilous fall shall thunder—God!”

“There was the hiding of His power.” Now, may we know more of the concealed glory? Will He grant a clearer, deeper vision? Yes, but the vision waits on sensibility. If the concealed Deity within the veiled worlds is to show Himself, it can only be by our cultivating sensibility to nature. “God has an outer gate of approach to us as well as an inner gate. Nature is His outer gate. He comes in material substance to our material bodies. Through our senses He enters our souls. Through the gratification of our desires His love glides into our hearts. . . . There is, strictly, a coming of God every year. He comes anew into nature’s skies and nature’s earth. Let us see Him, feel Him near, in the flowering meadow, in the fragrant pine-wood, and in the happy birds, and warm towards Him as Jesus did.” \* “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.” Nature is God clothed in material dress that thus He may appeal, through our senses, to our soul, by which alone we have fellowship with Him in nature.

\* “Our Deathless Hope.” John Pulsford.

Take, now, another illustration of this truth of the concealing of God.

## II. GOD CONCEALED IN CHRIST.

In the "In Memoriam" there is a beautiful ode which suggests a reason for the Incarnation.

"For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,  
Where truth in closest words shall fail,  
When truth embodied in a tale  
Shall enter in at lowly doors."

Divine truth could not be brought home to men in close philosophical argument. It will best enter "lowly doors" by earthly similitudes and parables. What a word is to thought Christ is to God—the divine articulation.

"And so the Word had breath, and wrought  
With human hands the creed of creeds  
In loveliness of perfect deeds,  
More strong than all poetic thought."

Thus the coming of Christ was as the coming of God. We have seen the glory of His character and His redemption, "full of grace and truth." There are many systems, but there is only this one Gospel, and yet half has not been told of the glory and the grace. The riches revealed are not to be compared with the glories concealed in Christ. The Incarnation is not only a revealing, but a concealing, of God. The infinite cannot get into the finite a full expression of itself. Humanity cannot hold all of God, and thus the "fulness of God dwelt in Him

*bodily.*" It follows that, while Christ reveals, He must also conceal, the Father. He could not show us more than the limitations of the body allowed, but what He shows suggests the wealth of what still remains. Is not this St. Paul's meaning when he speaks of the "unsearchable riches of Christ"? He surely means that there are still mines of riches in Christ as yet unexplored by us: "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing."

Test this concealing in Christ by examining some of His simple sayings—*His parables*. They seem at first clear and shallow; but as you brood over them, you find yourself going deeper and grappling with the profoundest questions concerning God and man. In the depths God and you are alone! Eternity lies about and within "these sayings of mine"; they have never been exhausted; they contain "unsearchable riches." You find a diamond on the surface, and think that you are rich; but the surface gem is but a hint that you should go deeper. You sink your shaft, only to wonder at the buried wealth, and to find that the mine cannot be exhausted. The words of Christ are deep and rich with eternal meanings: "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing."

The same is true of the *character of Christ*. Have you exhausted the glory of His character? Who is there among earth's greatest to say, I have worked out the riches of the personality of Jesus?

There is not one to claim, I have analysed Him, and I can fully explain Him! On the contrary, our wisest thinkers, with purest reverence, bow before the "unknown quantity" in Christ. Carlyle exclaims, with scarcely suppressed rapture: "Jesus of Nazareth our divinest symbol! Higher has the human thought not yet reached. . . . A symbol of quite perennial infinite character whose significance will ever demand to be anew inquired into and anew made manifest." \* Martineau, with emotion set on fire, gives expression to the highest faith, the essential faith of the universal Church, when he writes: "Not more clearly does the worship of the saintly soul, breathing through its window opened to the midnight, betray the secret of its affections than the mind of Jesus of Nazareth reveals the perfect thought and inmost love of the all-ruling God." †

Thus Christ leads us on to God. He is the golden vein in the quartz by which we trace the mine of "unsearchable riches." If the vein be so rich, then what must be the mine? If the revealed be so precious, then what of the concealed? The whole argument is there. If in nature we get a manifestation of infinite power and wisdom and beauty, and if in Christ we have the revelation of truth and love and sacrifice beyond the limits of our apprehension, then what of the infinite within—the vast treasures

\* "Sartor Resartus," pp. 137-140.

† "Endeavours after the Christian Life.

that remain hidden in God? Nature is a wonder, but God overflows nature. The Incarnation is a wonder, but God is greater than any form can hold. The cross is a surprise, but God stands behind the cross! All lead up to Him; and yet, as we draw near, the "glory excelleth."

What, then, is the inference but this—*that surprises await you.*

You have been surprised already by His grace. He pardoned you, and gave you peace. He had personal communion with you, and gave you an inward witness. Have you exhausted His surprises? No, indeed! He delights in the hidden things treasured for His children. His love is concealing some of His richest gifts. Love ever delights in surprises. It says, The children are coming home. And it conceals its choicest gifts until they come. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Such the inheritance of the heirs. God will give Himself to them. Whatever the glory of the Father, it is there for the sons. He will ever be a perennial surprise. We shall ever be knowing, and yet never fully know. We shall ever be drinking of the water of life, and yet never know the depth of the river. We shall ever look into the face of the King, and yet never know all His beauty.

Then think of the surprises that await you, of

the grace you have not tasted yet, of the glory that lies in perfection beyond the broken lights of earth, of the infinite truth and love and gladness of which you have known only the sweet droppings, and then go and live your life in the great hope. If you are the brother of Christ, you are a son of God and an heir to the vast estate that lies in the nature of God and in the possibilities of divine love.

And you who are tormented by doubt—has God aught for you? You have searched for Him along the lines of reason, and you have not found Him! But there is a way, through Christ, expressed by Him in two words—love and duty. Fall in love with Him, and do His holy will, and God will grow upon you and spread like summer over your life; and when the evening comes, the glory will deepen, and there will be a splendour in the sunset.

“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.”

## V.

### THE OLD AND THE NEW.

"And ye shall eat old store long kept, and ye shall bring forth the old because of the new."—LEVITICUS xxvi. 10.

THIS is a harvest promise made to Israel, on the condition of obedience to the commands of God. We get a picture of the barns filled with the old wheat on which the people live, and then before the old is exhausted we see the new wheat coming in so abundantly that they have to make room in the barn. I wish to apply the figure to old and new truths and our attitude towards them. And, first—

#### I. THE VALUE OF THE OLD.

There are certain old truths that lie at the foundation of religion—truths without which religion could not be. These truths, though they may not be capable of scientific demonstration, are capable of experimental verification, and along the lines of experience they are as real as any fact of science. They are truths attested not merely by solitary individuals, but they are common to the Christian consciousness; and though they are old

truths, they have always been and still are the nourishing wheat of character. The first of these is—

i. *The existence of God.*

God *is*! That is the first great fact on which there may be said to be a consensus of opinion. Wherever man is, there is a religion; and wherever religion is, there is homage rendered to some one or some thing. Now, there are four ways in which man has arrived intellectually at the existence of God—

(a) Through his *consciousness*. Along with man's self there has always been that other self, and he could no more get away from it than from his own shadow. If I may put it so, God haunts the human soul, and makes His presence felt in the soul of the man. The feeling of God within us is, for us at least who feel, the certified fact that God is. Man of himself is incapable of thinking so great a thought as that God is. It is God in the man who inspires the thought, and the thought haunting the man evermore becomes evidence of the corresponding reality. We know, then, that God is, not only because we are, but because He is in us, and makes us feel His august holiness and tremble before His broken law. God is involved in the structure of man's being, so that, thinking, he thinks of God, and, feeling, he feels his dependence on this "Power not himself."

Again, (b) through his *intuitions*. Intuitions are



the eyes of the soul by which man has looked straight into nature and said, "I see God." The materialist, who has lost his eyes by his own neglect, replies, with a cynical negative, "You are mistaken: you are colour blind; you think you see God where you see only a machine." But the theist persists, "Whereas I was blind, now I see. I see God in the sky, the sea, the grass, and the flowers. These are only thin veils that hide the face, but cannot cover the glory." Thus spiritual intuition, trained to look for the divine, sees what it looks for. Mr. Darwin, with something of tears in the sentence, said, "I suppose I must write myself down as an agnostic!" He seemed to have the feeling that by absorption in material studies he had neglected the discipline of the spiritual side of his nature; hence his blindness to the supernatural *in* the natural.

There is a fixed law that passes sentence of "deprivation" on any faculty that is unused or abused. Now, the theist sees where the materialist is blind; because he has trained the intuitive faculty—the eyes of the soul—he sees God in nature. "So long as the fragile dome of heaven is raised above our heads, and the firm-set earth is spread forth beneath our feet, while the everlasting stars course in their mighty orbits, . . . so long must our hearts go out towards Him that upholds and comprises all."

“Where’er I look abroad,  
I see the living form and face of God—  
Which men call Nature, all whose loveliness  
I garner in my soul with pious care :  
And when I look within, in thoughtful hour,  
I feel a shaping presence and a power  
That makes me know the same great God is there.”

Again, man has arrived intellectually at the existence of God (*c*) through *Science*. Science is the search for the facts of the universe, and behind the facts it postulates an “inscrutable power.” It saves us, therefore, the trouble of proving that there *is* something more than nature. Mr. Herbert Spencer, the philosopher of evolution, to whose marvellous generalisations we owe so much, writes : “The consciousness of an inscrutable power manifested to us through phenomena has been growing ever clearer, and must eventually be freed from all its imperfections” ; and elsewhere he speaks of an “ultimate reality.” Thus science, through its greatest exponent, postulates a “power” behind all phenomena. It may be only a philosophical substratum to account for matter and energy, but it is, nevertheless, a postulate which makes theism possible, and certainly in no sense destroys it. In the words of Mr. John Addington Symonds : “It cannot be too emphatically insisted on that the much-dreaded Darwinism leaves the theological belief in a divine spirit untouched. In other words, spirituality is restored to nature.” And this

spirituality is becoming more and more evident. There is no rational explanation of the phenomena of nature apart from God. "As in the roaring loom of Time the endless web of events is woven, each strand shall make more and more clearly visible the living garment of God."

As far as science and philosophy are concerned, it may be safely affirmed that materialism is buried, and that atheism awaits sepulture, and that agnosticism is "sicklied o'er with the pale cast" of death. God is more and more revealed in the infinitely little, as well as in the infinitely great.

Again, man has arrived at his highest knowledge of the existence of God (*d*) through *Christ*. What is it that has come in Christ? Not *all* of God, for the limitations of the Incarnation made that impossible. Then what has come in that holy form of Jesus? This—and it is the vital thing for us—*God's character has come!* What is it? It gets expressed in one word ever on the lips of the divine Son—"Father." Now, that is the one thing we most need to know. We felt God in our consciousness, and we saw Him by intuition in nature, and we heard of Him through the researches of science; but all our life cried to know, How does God feel towards me? Does He care in the least for my little life in the midst of these awful forces of nature and this vastness lit with worlds? Will He help me to realise my destiny as a spiritual

being and stand at last on the heights of life? I have sinned; will He forgive? These are questions touching the character of God, and they are answered by Christ as He says, "When ye pray, say, Our Father"—answered in His own life in that character of holy love, not seen on earth before, and answered when He declared that Himself was the showing of God to men as the Father: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

We have, then, here, one of the old truths, on which we have nourished our spiritual life and hope—that God is, and that God is Father. Are we to lose this truth? Can we conceive of any advanced thought, any incoming wheat that shall rob us of the nourishing food of this old truth of the religious life? Or, if I may put it so, do you who have nourished purest aspiration and strongest life, the very tissues of your spirituality, on this truth of the existence and character of God, ever want to lose it? No indeed. The suggestion is an eclipse. The loss of God even to thought is an unspeakable horror! Let it comfort you that whatever may come along the lines of the "new theology," or the "higher criticism," or the discoveries of science, or the speculations of philosophy, this truth will remain changeless, eternal: *God is, and God is Father*. Your sin may rise like a black cloud, but the fact will shine like the sun behind the cloud. Your sorrow may brim with tears, but the fact will make itself known in a hand

that comes through darkness. Oh! soul of man, never be afraid that aught can happen here or elsewhere to change the immutable character of God. If you have lived by this fact of what He *is* in Christ, then live by it still: "Ye shall eat old store long kept." Whatever of new may come, it can *never* change or be a substitute for this old wheat in the garner of truth: "God is Love."

Consider the value of another of these old truths—

ii. *The sonship of man.*

If God is Father, we are sons. Sin—that hateful thing—has alienated us from the Father, but not the Father from us. Our Lord always appeals to man on the ground of that relation. As a *spirit*, man is a child of God, unless we conceive the devil to be a father of spirits. The confusion arose in the use of the word "adoption," which seemed to imply that man never was a son of God, and might only become so through redemption. "This made the divine Fatherhood and the human sonship alike unreal. He who is no son by nature can never become a son by adoption. Before a child can be the adopted son of any man he must be the real son of some man; and so if it was only by adoption that God became our Father, then we could never, in any true sense, be His sons, nor He, in any true sense, our Father." God is the Father of our spirit, and therefore we are God's

sons, and that fact is eternally unalterable. But mark! Something has occurred to break the filial relation. It is clear that all the sons are not in correspondence with their Father, and are alienated in will and affection. Hence the problem, How show the unfilial sons the pure ideal of filial sonship? The Father solved it by sending His "beloved Son"—who is the perfect type of the filial spirit—into the world, that the lapsed sons might see and realise the spirit they had lost. What, then, is the old truth—the truth by which the first disciples came back into the filial relation? What did they see in Christ? They saw the two essential qualities of love and obedience. He loved His Father with a pure, unselfish love, and He obeyed His Father with a glad, selfless will. He was thus the visible embodiment of the perfect sonship. It was an object-lesson given at infinite cost by God, that they and we all might see the heavenly sonship on earth, and learn the way back into the filial spirit.

Now, this is an old truth, and I assume that you have come by it into that gladness of sonship that says, "I love God as my Father, and I try to do His will in Christ." All these years of your pilgrimage you have lived on the "old store long kept"; you have been tremblingly glad in that sweet life of the sons of God. But sometimes you are afraid that you may lose the old truth. So

many new things are coming in and old things are going out that you fear you may lose what has been so precious to you—your conscious sonship. Do not fear! You cannot be deprived of what is, essentially, spiritual. Creeds may change their form, and the higher criticism may rearrange the books of the Old Testament, and distinguish, where possible, between the divine and human elements, and yet the great *spiritual* truths and facts will remain ever unshaken. No readjustment of the old and no coming in of the new can in the least affect our assurance of sonship through Christ: “Ye shall eat of the old store long kept.”

Note the value of another old truth on which you have been nourished—

iii. *The hope of future life.*

I have spoken of fatherhood and of sonship, and what more natural than that father and sons should at last be together? And what is heaven but the home of filial sonship? Now, that hope has always been vivid and precious to you. You never doubted our Lord's words, “In My Father's house are many mansions.” The thought of it was the nourishing “wheat” of character, and nerved you for many a conflict; and as ever nearer, through the mists of the years, shone the light of the home, there came the peace of a great calm over you. You caught, in some degree, the tone of its high thought and deep feeling. You felt

again a little of "the heaven that lies about our infancy"; but now, as in old age you near the wave, there rises out of the deep a phantom—it is the phantom of your own physical fear, and it seems to mock you with, "See, your deathbed is here; your home is the grave; you have been deceived. There is no dawn to eternal darkness."

Now, what is the *corrective*? This: go back to the garner of experience and "eat the old store long kept." Did you not have an experience of calm and rapture in the very hope that you cherished? Well, that was a prophecy. All heavenly thoughts and feelings are so many prophets in the soul pointing heavenward. The reflection in the pure stream tells of a sun. If by the margin of the deep you doubt, then fall back on the old truth and aspiration and hope of your past, "eat of the old store long kept," and never question that there is a heaven, of which you had a foretaste—the "earnest of the spirit."

I have spoken of the value of the old, and I want now to touch lightly—

## II. THE WELCOME TO THE NEW.

"Ye shall bring forth the old *because of the new*." While we realise the value of the old, we are to make room for the new in the garner of the soul. Strictly speaking, there is no new truth. Truth, philosophically, is reality, and reality is not new, but very, very old. Truth is the revealing of God;



it is God in His "becoming," and thus He is ever known in varied forms. The forms may be new, but the truth itself is old—old, and yet ever young as the Eternal God. The measure of truth is the measure of God, and who can measure the circle of which He is the centre !

When, then, we speak of the coming of the "new," we mean that *we* have come into a new relation to truth, and with clearer insight have won some new aspect of that boundless infinity of God. As in astronomy we see, by the telescope, the myriad worlds only in sections, so truth becomes visible to us only in the segments of its vast circle. Let us, while we value the old, give generous hospitality to the new. It is a fresh facet of the diamond we had not seen from our angle. God is always wanting to show more of Himself to us. It seems as if the problem of the Infinite One might be, How reveal Himself to the finite many ? We must not be afraid of changing forms ; they are only the clothes of truth. We get that poetically expressed in "Akbar's Dream" :

"And what are forms ?

Fair garments, plain or rich and fitting close  
Or flying looselier, warmed but by the heart  
Within them, moved but by the living limb,  
And cast aside when old for newer—forms."

It is a profound mistake to put living truth into a cast-iron form. We keep it from showing itself

in any new aspect, and we are in danger of thinking that there is none. Just that has too often cramped men into hard bigotry and wrought the "confusion of tongues."

" . . . They blurt  
Their furious formalisms, and but hear  
The clash of tides that meet in narrow seas—  
Not the Great Voice, not the True Deep."

This is specially an age in which the "new" is coming in upon us—new, first, in the sense of a more *human conception of God*. We are not less awed by the Eternal Majesty, but we are more consoled by the humanity of the Father. We are seeing clearer that the God who stands in Christ is deeply, beautifully human in the pure emotion of His being, and while we reverence still, yet we feel a tenderer note of love singing through our weary life.

And again, the truth of the *Divine Immanence* in all nature and history and man. God in the great processes of nature, evolving ever beauty and order. God filling all the vastness and all the worlds. God in the great social evolution by which a new order is slowly emerging, and in which the "survival of the fittest" is being qualified by the nurture of the weakest. God in all things and everywhere, and yet not the diffused life of pantheism, but the conscious, intelligent First Cause. This truth of the Divine Immanence, known to the Greek

Fathers and obscured by the Latins, is once again flashing its beauty over the mind of man.

And more, God is coming anew in the light of recent discoveries *and research falling on the Old Book*, and while some things fade into romance, yet the spirituality of the Book, and the grandeur of the moral law, and ever the warm breathing as of a Person in the page become more real.

I pray you, while you cherish the old, give hospitality to the new, and remember how He said of the Blessed Spirit, "He shall take of the things of God and show them unto you."

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,  
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

"Ye shall bring forth the old because of the new."

## VI.

### THE OUTLOOK OF THE SOUL.

"He brought me forth also into a large place."—2 SAMUEL xxii. 10.

THIS psalm is a kind of *resumé* of the deliverances of David, and the words of our text probably give us one of the cave scenes. It would seem as if he had spent all night in some murky cave, and, stealing out in the early morning, made his way, by the dim light of the stars, to the mountain top, and there waited for the first flush of the dawn. See ! it comes with its rosy tints and tender grace. Now it grows in glory, and, flashing along the rugged peaks, they become spires of flame ; and now it shoots shafts into every corner and crevice where dewdrops hide, and they glisten and vanish. Then down into deep precipices the golden arrows fly, and at their touch darkness slips away. David, seated among the crags, watches the spreading splendour, beneath and around—vast forests and green fields and threading streams and, far away, the gleam of ocean. He finds himself circled by glory that grows with the growing light, and, with his heart

big with emotion, exclaims, "He brought me forth also into a large place!" No longer straitened by the cave, his soul moves freely in the largeness of nature—he has room for his life.

Let us leave David singing his morning hymn to God, and see how these words express the life of the Christian man of to-day: God has set us in a "large place." And, first—

#### I. IN RELATION TO GOD.

There are two things in this relation of which I would speak:—

##### i. *It gives me God.*

I do not mean that other religions do not give God to the worshipper, but that, in the "large place" of the Christian Gospel, God is so wondrously revealed as to amount to a new revelation. From this point of view God becomes a vivid reality to the Christian consciousness. We have now a philosophy of religion presenting us with irresistible proofs of the personality of God unknown to the older religions. The clearer knowledge of our own personality has shown more clearly the personality of God. *Apologetics*, working along this line, have given us a clue to the interpretation of the Divine through the human. "It is not that human personality is a realised completeness, to which we desire to make our conceptions of Divine Being correspond, but rather that human experience gives us indications of what personality, in its further

realisation, would mean. . . . Only the Supreme Being can attain the full idea of personality. The ideals which hover behind and above human experience are approaches, more or less, towards *that*." \*

The whole history of religious literature since Augustine has been an attempt to

"Correct the portrait by the living face,  
Man's God by God's God in the mind of man,"

until we see the Shadow of God in our own personality, as reason and will and love yearning for self-communication. "Belief in the personality of man and belief in the personality of God stand or fall together. . . . Recent philosophical theories, which substitute matter or an "unknowable" for the self-conscious Deity, likewise dissipate the personality of man as ordinarily conceived. If they deny that God is a spirit, they deny with equal emphasis that man is a spirit. . . . On this fact of our own personality the validity of the argument for theism depends." †

"Mind seeks to see,  
Touch, understand, by mind inside of me,  
The outside mind."

Agnosticism, by postulating something it cannot define, makes theism possible. It does not destroy

\* R. C. Moberly. *Church Congress*, 1891.

† "The Grounds of Theism and Christian Belief." G. P. Fisher.

certitude, but it honestly confesses its own limitation. Where agnosticism ends, Christian philosophy begins, and says, We take all your admissions, and suggest that your "unknowable" may possess mind and will and feeling. How? Why, is it not an axiom that every effect must partake of the nature of its cause? It is obvious that man is an effect of some hidden cause, and that he possesses mind and will and feeling. May we not therefore conclude that the creative cause is endowed with similar qualities? But that is to say, The cause is a person; and when we say, with Lotze, that "perfect personality is in God alone," we get the reasonable idea of an infinite person, whom we know under the great name of God.

Further, Science has made such discoveries in the infinitely little of the infinitely great as to compel reason to the admission of a conscious, intelligent First Cause. As the poet says, the little things go lessening

"Till at last God comes behind them,"

wherein he sees "the small becomes the dreadful and immense."

But again, this "large place" not only gives me God, *but shows me the way of contact with God.*

How to get into touch was always the great problem. Human life is the loneliest of all lonely things: we each live our own silent life.

“Solemn before us  
Veiled the dark portal,  
Goal of all mortal;  
Stars silent rest o'er us,  
Graves under us silent.”

We are like scattered islands in the deep: we look across to one another, and the air is full of the wafted fragrance. But all the same, the great deep lies between us, and circles us, and we hear the murmur of the “immortal sea.” The soul of man in his island home, hearing the murmur and feeling the rush of the eternities, said, “God is, but how may I get into touch with Him?”

All the old religions show a way by which man got back to God, but we claim for the Christian Revelation a simpler, larger way. How? Because of two things: first, an actual showing here, in time, of the life of God in Christ. No one else had ever come, and no one else has ever been since, like Christ. His was a new type of character, blending all moral perfections in one personality. Christ holds for us the full moral values of God. Then, next, He gave a practical illustration of how we may get into touch with God. This He did in His own life, by calling God “Holy Father”; and, by the two qualities of love and obedience, He shows the way into the filial relation. But what is this but perfect sonship, in which Father and Son are one in life and will and love? Thus man may get into contact with God.



Is not this a "large place"? We not only know that God is, but we know how, in Christ, to get into close relations with Him, and call Him "our Father." That relation then becomes a union which unifies our being. In it all discords are led into harmony. It is a very "large place"—large as the heart of infinite love.

Consider, again—

ii. *It gives me a Divine Worker.*

"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Christ shows God as the greatest Worker. We need to restore that fact: we have been losing sight of it lately. Men talk as if the Almighty had withdrawn from human affairs. "I believe in God," said one, "but the worst of it is, that God doesn't do anything!" We have all felt that, when some shock has broken through us. When we listened to the helpless wail of butchered Armenians, and witnessed the amazing apathy of the Powers, we said, How is it that God does not work? Or when we felt the burden of the toiling lives of our unnatural social system, and found no solution, we marvelled at the silence of God, and doubted whether God works at all. Thus we who strive to build the City of God on earth are in danger of profanity, of an impious doubt. We forget that the measure of God's time is not the ticking of our little clock. We think eternity ought to be regulated from Greenwich. We want

to reform all the poor drunkards in a day. We want to adjust the economic relations at home, and correct kingdoms abroad, in a lifetime. The motive is good, but the order is large, and must wait. *We* live in minutes, in figures on a dial, in segments and arcs, but God lives in the vast circles of eternity !

But can it be shown that God is working ?

*History* says, God is working, and shows us the footprints of God across the ages ; and every print is the sign of some great revolution or reformation, out of which the life of man has risen purer and stronger.

*Science* says, God is working ; and shows us, in geology, the marks of God in the building of this beautiful world as a home for the coming of man, and, in biology, the hands of God in the making of man by slow degrees until he stands on the heights of life.

“ Man as yet is being made, and ere the crowning Age of  
ages,

Shall not æon after æon pass and touch him into  
shape ? ”

*Sociology* says, God is working ; and shows how civilisation and culture came. First the family, and then the tribe, and then the town. Men combining and learning through their needs—mind and personality gradually unfolding.

*Literature* says, God is working, and shows us in its pages, from the early Vedas to the "Purple East" of Mr. Watson, how the Divine is the inspiration in the human of all high thought and pure feeling.

The theory of Evolution "is the contribution of this century towards the progressive mastery of the idea of the Creator as displayed in nature." It "assumes the universal immanence of God as mind and will in nature."

Thus history and science and sociology and literature, interpreted by evolution, confirm the teaching of Jesus: "My Father worketh hitherto." But He significantly adds, "and I work," and proceeds to show us the heart of God in the tragedy of the cross. We think of it as an old-world story, and that then the Christ went into the peace of a silent heaven! There is no more fatal theology than that—fatal to our work and our faith. On the cross the atonement, as a final act, was made, but redemption is continuous. Redemption is that identification of God with the human race by which, in all its processes of struggle, He works for its moral emancipation, and so—

"Through the gates that bar the distance  
Comes a gleam of what is higher."

Christ is always carrying on His heart the woes of His brother men. There is no rest in heaven

while one soul goes astray. They are all working and suffering for the lost. We have only recently rediscovered the truth of the suffering of God in the sorrows of the race. Mr. Coulson Kernahan, in "God and the Ant," has done good service in restoring this lost truth of theology, when in his dream the Christ made answer, "Did you indeed think, beloved, that, while you were suffering and sorrowing on earth, I, your Elder Brother and Saviour, could rest content in the bliss of heaven; that I ceased to share your sorrows when My earthly life was at an end?"

This is a "large place," in which we see God and Christ working and suffering, as only love can suffer, for the redemption of the race. Not to enter into sympathy with His purpose, and not to put ourselves on the side of the redeeming forces, is to make it harder for the Redeemer. With what poignant pathos that gets expressed in "Domine quo vadis":

"Lo, on the darkness break a wandering ray,  
A vision flashed along the Appian Way,  
Divinely in the pagan night it shone—  
A mournful Face—a Figure hurrying on;  
Though haggard and dishevelled, frail and worn,  
A King—of David's lineage—crowned with thorn.  
'Lord, whither farest?' Peter, wondering, cried.  
'To Rome,' said Christ, 'to be re-crucified.'

\* \* \* \* \*

Into the night the vision ebbed like breath,  
And Peter turned and rushed on Rome and death."

Thus the world is being redeemed by crowned suffering, but the "fellowship of suffering" is a fellowship of exceeding joy: "He brought me forth also into a large place."

Now let us look at the subject—

## II. IN RELATION TO LIFE.

And here—

### i. *It saves me from pessimism.*

I think if I were an atheist—if I could believe that we all of us are but "gnats in the gloom" to be "swallowed in vastness"—I should be tempted to say, Let us be "gnats," and not try to be men! Atheism lacks the inspiration of the noble ideal which lies in the perfect personality of God. The atheist is of necessity a pessimist, and the logical thing for him to do is to ask for the key of the "lethal chamber," and so help to annihilate life.

According to Professor Sidgwick, that is Hartmann's "practical conclusion"—"working towards the end of the world process and the annihilation of all so-called existence."\* Theism sets us in a "large place" when contrasted with the pessimism of Schopenhauer and Hartmann. Again, agnosticism, postulating the "unknowable," leaves me in terrible doubt as to what it is; and where doubt is, darkness broods, and the soul is haunted with nameless fear, but the knowledge of God in Christ is the sunbeam

\* "History of Ethics."

that strikes across the world. In the Christian consciousness God not only is, but He is Father, working for the redemption of His children. In such a "large place" of experience, optimism sits, like David on the heights, watching the sun rise on the world and the rush of darkness before the shafts of light! Then, come out of your gloomy cave of negation into the positive experience of God and the possibilities of the cross of Christ!

I know the coarse materialist, as voiced by the poet, says :

"All very well—but the good Lord Jesus has had His day";

but I would much rather hold the faith and have the experience of the patient nurse, who replies :

"'Had?' has it come? It has only dawned. It will come by and by.

O how could I serve in the wards if the hope of the world were a lie!"

From the "large place" we have seen the dawn, and we know that the day is coming.

Lastly—

ii. *It gives me an outlook.*

When David saw the sun rise, and watched the day grow, what an outlook he had!—what new worlds of beauty flashed out of the night! So, from this "large place" in Christ, the soul wins a great outlook. What is it? May I tell you? Down

the ages and beyond the gloom I see rising on earth the City of God—a city of souls. It is white as snow, and Love is the enthroned King. The nations have come and laid down at the gates of it their cruel arms, and Peace walks the streets of it with face of gladness, and men call one another the brothers of Christ, and order is perfected as of souls attuned to holy harmonies; and I find no place for the tyranny of competition, and the madness of drink, and the cry of poverty, and the clash of creeds, and the faces of starved children. “The children play in the streets thereof,” and their joyous laughter is as the music of silver bells. And I see old men and women, who have grown young and fresh and beautiful in its light and love. And I see that sorrow is no more, for sin is no more, and the government and the literature and the commerce of the city are transfigured as if with holy light; and One, whose Face is marred, and yet beautiful with the beauty of God, walks the City, and is known and loved of all men as “the King.” And as I gaze I hear a multitude of voices, like ‘the sound of many waters,’ chanting, ‘Our Father who art in heaven, Thy will *is* done on earth!’ And for answer I hear a Great Voice: ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God!’”

"He brought me forth also into a large place."

"An air of coolness plays upon his face,  
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast,  
And then he thinks he knows  
The hills where his life rose,  
And the sea where it goes."



## VII.

### THE MEETING WITH GOD.

"God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me."—GENESIS xlviii, 3.

THE study of character is always interesting and sometimes instructive, when used as a corrective.

In Esau and Jacob we get two brothers illustrating two types of character. In broad outline they stand—Esau for emotion, and Jacob for intellect.

Esau has a splendid dash and a reckless daring. You can never be sure what he will do, or what he will say, or where you may find him: he is strong in impulse. "As the channel turns the stream follows"; but it goes with a rush that fascinates. He strikes the imagination, and allows us to speculate on his doings; he moves vigorously along the line of his strongest impulse, without reference to his reason.

Jacob, on the contrary, keeps his emotion under control, and gives larger play to reason. As a

result, we find him, in earlier life, crafty and calculating, with a keen eye for the better side of a bargain and with carefully planned methods for getting it. He is a born diplomatist, and is always a match for any opponent, even his wily uncle Laban. He moves cautiously along the line of his clearest mental radiance ; his judgment is influenced more by reason than by emotion, and yet he is always a man of deep domestic feeling. We cannot like him as well as we like Esau, because he is too much of a machine—regulated and oily, and moving with ordered precision.

We feel that Esau, if he had yielded to the best rather than the worst impulse of his dashing nature, might have evolved a more finished character than Jacob ; his profound mistake was, that he lived like a rollicking boy, out of his animal instincts, and so naturally shaped into an animal. His brother Jacob ruled the "brute," and got glimpses of diviner things. It was a long process, involving discipline ; but he cultivated spiritual sensibility until a half-mystic vein, deep buried, began to pulse into his intellect and turn it towards God ; and when at last God and the man met, he got purged of his sin, and we find him growing, through the years, until, in old age, he becomes a stately figure of moral dignity and chastened goodness.

Now, we get the secret of this spiritual evolution

in the words I have read : "God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me."

Look at the picture !

An old man lying on his couch, worn and wasted with sickness, the poor blind eyes looking far away over the past, as if they saw some tender, beautiful scene. At that moment, Joseph, the viceroy, comes in, with his two boys, to ask the blessing of their grandfather. See Jacob slowly lifting himself on the couch, feeling for the lads ! Then he begins his last words, full of tender memories and strange predictions, as if the soul, trembling on the verge, gained some fresh sense of vision and spoke of the things to be.

I now take only the opening words of the address, which contain a retrospect enshrining a beautiful memory : "God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz, . . . and blessed me. And, first—

#### I. GOD AND THE MAN.

These are the two factors closely related in the text. Take the man, Jacob, and let us be sure that he is most human. We have been looking at his character, but when we get to his experiences—ah, then we begin to feel how pathetically human he is ! his heart beats its pulse into our heart, and his pain shoots through us. We have lived over again some of his experiences. It was a real human life, answering in its pathos to our own.

Look at this scene :—

One day there goes out of the tent at Hebron a bright, beautiful youth, who is the pride and the joy of his father ; but the youth never comes back, and for years the father waits, and grows old and bent, with wistful longing for the vanished face. Is not that human ? Is not that your experience ? One day the child that made the music of your life went out and never came back, and you are waiting for the sound of the familiar step. But there is a shadow on your face. It has grown softer now, in old age ; but the lines are still there, and when you go to the boy they will be smoothed out.

Or take another scene :—

It is so tenderly human in the retrospect of Jacob's life. The old man talks about it gently when he is dying, and his blind eyes are full of light. He is looking back, and he sees, far away, in the land he loved, a lonely grave by the way, and he says : Joseph, it is your mother's grave—Rachel, your beautiful mother ; she sleeps there. . . I buried her on the way to Ephrath ! It is a scene full of poignant pathos—an old man recalling “the tender grace of the day that is dead.” And yet how human it is ! and you who look back on those dead days say, Ah, yes, I know the mingled sorrow and joy of that vision of the lonely, loved grave !

But Jacob's life is natural not only in its pathos, but, alas ! *in its often littleness.*

How strangely mixed this man's life is with prayer and fraud, with visions high and vices low! It is a moral complexity that startles us with the word "hypocrite" on our tongue. But we recall our own self, only to see that the man in Jacob is the man in us. We have done, and we have felt, things of the same moral value. The type gets reproduced poetically in "Sir Lancelot":

". . . But in me lived a sin  
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,  
Noble, and knightly in me twined and clung  
Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower  
And poisonous grew together."

Or when, in his nobler mood, he exclaims :

". . . In me there dwells  
No greatness, save it be some far-off touch  
Of greatness, to know well I am not great:  
There is the man."

And most of us, under the search-light of conscience, will see our self in that photograph of the knight, with a dual nature.

I have dwelt on this with a purpose, for I find another factor in the text. Can aught be done for a man like Jacob—the man who is typical, in grief and grossness, of many a life? Is there any power to soften the hard face of his grief, and to make out of such littleness a character of true greatness? The answer is in the great word—God. "God appeared unto me, . . . and blessed me."

Note—

## II. GOD MEETS WITH THE MAN.

The blessing seems to have been twofold.

### i. *In the appearance of God.*

It is evident that Divine appearances to a man can only be subjective, by spiritual contact, or objective, by visible media. "God who appeared unto me" is a suggestive formula expressing a spiritual experience. It has been well described as the "God consciousness" in man. The soul of the man awakes to find over against his own self another Infinite Self, making its presence felt by waves of emotion new and most wonderful. It is such an addition to consciousness of purified feeling and elevated thought as to recreate character and change the current of life. The Power that calls the soul to its awakening is that "Light which lighteth every man, coming into the world." By Christ the experience is called the "new birth," and by evangelicals "conversion," and by mystics "illumination." But whatever the name, the fact is of infinite value. It is the meeting with God, and it is the profoundest experience a human soul can have. While countless memories will fade, this one memory will remain vivid to the end. "God appeared unto me at Luz, . . . and blessed me."

But why did God come to this man? To bless him! What?—to bless the man whose character was crafty and subtle and mean? Yes, to bless

that very man in his prayer for a better life, and to help him realise some pure ideal. God appears, not to curse our littleness, but to chasten us into greatness. All life begins low down in weakness, but, through struggle, God leads it into strength. Is there not even for us a kind of fascination about weakness and immaturity? The shepherd will carry the lame lamb in his arms. The mother will be found most often caressing her deformed boy. The florist will be found most anxious about his drooping flowers. It is the loveliest instinct of humanity to care most for the weak things of life. And so God comes to man because He is the Eternal Humanity—not to hurt, but to heal—not to curse, but to bless. It was such an One who found Jacob; and by the margin of the wave he felt the calm of the sea.

“And so beside the Silent Sea  
I wait the muffled oar;  
No harm from Him can come to me  
On ocean or on shore.”

There is no nobler conception of the Almighty than the august majesty of Deity, which fills the reverent soul with wonder and subdued awe; and yet we must not lose the consolation of His humanity. Only of late is it taking its place in the wider thought of souls who look toward the beautiful in God. It seems to be Christ's own thought of the Father in the parables of the lost

sheep and coin and son. They are essentially human parables, based on human emotion. All the images suggest an infinite heart, into which natural feeling is projected, thus giving us the method of the exposition of God. If Divine feeling is something very different from the human feeling portrayed in the parables, then the parables show us nothing of God. But it is evident that, in the use of symbols which express human emotion in its deepest notes, our Lord would have us find corresponding feeling in the heart of God; and so we speak of the humanity of the Father. All that pure, deep gushing love of the natural father for the prodigal is the image in time of what God is in eternity. Is it not the one thing needful to understand the character of God? It has been so obscured by a mechanical theology, and so missed by a one-sided philosophy, that the character of God has had little attraction for men. To-day many are thinking the pagan thought of Him—as the regnant Deity of stoical indifference, or at best as the *Deus absconditus*, who, having initiated a process of evolution from “gas to genius,” is no more interested in the making of man! What wonder that men should be cynical and despairing! Our theology needs a more human exposition of the character of God, and the reaction from the creeds to the heart will help us to clearer insight. Christ draws the portraiture of God, *on its emotional*



*side*, always with His eyes fixed on the human heart. No artist could give us a clearer likeness than the Master gives in those three clearly cut cameos. They are vivid delineations of deepest human feeling in God, as the Father of men. If men would only visit this Divine art-gallery, and look with hushed reverence on Christ's portraits of God, surely a new glory would flash on the gloom of life. In the awful majesty they would see mingling the tender humanity that breaks into the stammering story of the prodigal with the kisses of love. "God appeared unto me, . . . and blessed me."

Again, the blessing was—

ii. *In the satisfaction of the man.*

Doubtless the blessing satisfied Jacob, because, with all his littleness and selfishness, he felt that God really cared for him and was helping him on to a nobler life. What thought did Jacob think of God? Remember, the only book which lay open to him was the book of nature. Over him was the infinite sky, with its depths thronged with worlds; and we can imagine how the thought that haunted David in later years came like a mocking spectre out of the night to Jacob: "When I consider Thy heavens, the moon, and the stars Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him?" The God of those countless worlds—what does He care for me?

So, standing under the Syrian skies in the midst of the splendour of worlds, Jacob might say to God, What am I but a grain of dust contrasted with the worlds, or a flickering torch beside those ever-flaming suns ! What am I that Thou shouldst be mindful of me ? Then Jacob would be in despair, and count his life worthless. But there came that day at Luz, a most wonderful day, for when he is old and dying he talks about it : " God appeared unto me, . . . and blessed me." What was that experience but a new consciousness, in which God was revealed to his spirit, and Jacob knew from then that he, a spirit, was of more value than all those silent worlds. God and matter cannot hold communion ; it is only " spirit with spirit can meet."

We, too, are tempted, in sight of the glory of the worlds revealed by great telescopes and a new photography, to doubt our relative value, to wonder whether we are objects of concern to the Deity. We ask, Is not the universe greater than I ? No ! " I decline to surrender my dignity in the presence of material immensity. The tides rise and fall by an eternal necessity, but the passions which ebb and flow in my heart I can check and control. The planets are bound by irreversible forces to the orbits in which they travel, but I am often conscious of perplexity as to the line in which I should move. . . . I am greater than the planets. I am greater than

the sea. They are subject ; I am sovereign. They submit ; I rule. They are bound ; I am free. My own consciousness assures me of this, and it is confirmed by the Voice of God."

Thus, doubtless, Jacob at Luz, hearing the Voice of God, found the true value of his life compared with material worlds. And that is the satisfaction to every soul whom God has blessed : it feels already half-emancipated from matter, and knows itself to be spirit in the knowledge of Him who is Absolute Spirit ; and it rests, and can sing, with our greatest poet :

"Will my tiny spark of being wholly vanish in your deeps  
and heights ?

Must my day be dark by reason, O ye heavens, of your  
boundless nights,

Rush of suns and roll of systems, and your fiery clash  
of meteorites ?

*Spirit*, nearing yon dark portal at the limit of thy human  
state,

Fear not thou the hidden purpose of that Power which  
alone is great,

Nor the myriad world, His Shadow, nor the Silent Opener  
of the Gate !"

Now notice—

### III. THE VALUE OF A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE IN THE RETROSPECT OF LIFE.

Death is casting its shadow on the face of Jacob, and he looks back over a long life full of detail ; and yet only one fact seems vivid in the conscious-

ness of the dying man : " God appeared unto me at Luz." He names that as the most impressive fact in his long life. It is the retrospect of one who, under the shadow of eternity, is able to assess the true value of events ; and he says, That vision of God at Luz is the best and greatest ! God met him, and the sky was full of angels, and the old man lives over again the wonderful experience, and in dying talks of it as the one beautiful thing.

I want you to have an experience like this when God met with you, and you began life with a new sense of its relation to God, and with the passion of a new, deep love for Christ. Find a point of retrospect, and see whether there be any Bethel in your past. Do you see the landscape through which the river of your life has glided, with soft lights and delicate colours, but with no spot marked " sacred " in your memory where God met you and blessed you, and where " Christ crucified " became such a vision of Holy Love that your glad heart would fain have kissed His wounds ? Have you never had any such experience in all the years ? Then your life is missing the most wonderful thing that ever can happen to a human soul ! In the end, all else will seem poor in the fading light compared with this one most beautiful fact : " God appeared unto me at Luz, . . . and blessed me." It is easier for us than for Jacob to find and know God, since, in the history of our world, One came on

whose Face was the holy light and whose Cross was marked with love's sacrifice. No human theory can hold all the meaning of Christ crucified, and we need no theory when we grasp the fact. Different souls may, doubtless, come in differing ways, but I like best the way of F. W. Faber, in "The Precious Blood":

"I was upon the seashore; and my heart filled with love it knew not why. Its happiness went out over the wide waters and upon the unfettered wind, and swelled up into the free dome of blue sky until it filled it. The dawn lighted up the faces of the ivory cliffs, which the sun and sea had been blanching for centuries of God's unchanging love. The miles of noiseless sands seemed vast, as if they were the floor of eternity. Somehow the daybreak was like eternity. The idea came over me of that feeling of acceptance which so entrances the soul just judged and just admitted into heaven. *To be saved!* I said to myself, *To be saved!* Then the thoughts of all the things implied in salvation came in one thought upon me; and I said, This is the one grand joy of life; and I clapped my hands like a child, and spoke to God aloud. But then there came many thoughts all in one thought, about the nature and manner of our salvation. *To be saved with such a salvation!* This was a grander joy, the second grand joy of life; and I tried to say some lines of a hymn, but the words were choked in my throat.

The ebb was sucking the sea down over the sand quite silently ; and the cliffs were whiter and more day-like. Then there came many more thoughts all in one thought ; and I stood still without intending it. *To be saved by such a Saviour !* This was the grandest joy of all, the third grand joy of life ; and it swallowed up the other joys ; and after it there could be on earth no higher joy. I said nothing ; but I looked at the sinking sea as it reddened in the morning. Its great heart was throbbing in the calm ; and methought I saw the Precious Blood of Jesus in heaven, throbbing that hour with real human love of me."

When the mists of death gather about you, and thought wanders from the house of the body over the paths you have passed and the scenes you have loved, may your most precious spot be that place of meeting with God where, with Faber, you found the great salvation in the greater Saviour.

## VIII.

### THE PROGRAM OF CHRIST.

"Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations,"—ST. MATTHEW xxviii. 19.

THIS is the program of Jesus Christ, and a more startling program was never drawn. He maps out the world, and, like a great general, says to His disciples, "Go and conquer." He will not have a fragment merely, but the whole world. The audacity of the idea suggests its divinity. Such an idea as this never got into the mind of any man. And the method of this conquest is by teaching—teaching the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. "Name" stands for nature. The Gospel is a revelation of the deepest things in the nature of the Godhead. The nature is one, but the manifestations are three. Their inspiration in giving effect to the program was to be drawn from the assured presence of the Master: "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the days." It is the most wonderful commission ever given by a master to his disciples, and involves some of the deepest verities.

Let us look at it more closely—

I. THE UNIVERSAL ADAPTATION OF THE GOSPEL.

“Make disciples of *all* the nations.”

They were to preach the Gospel to the Jew, bound with the ceremonies of ceremonialism, buried in the grave of traditionalism ; and we know how the Gospel was to them the “power of God unto salvation.” They were to preach to the Greek, subtle and cultured and æsthetic, with his Aristotelian ethics and his religion of the beautiful ; and we know how many a Greek was won for Christ. They were to preach to the Roman, stern and energetic and practical, with his multitude of gods and hecatomb of sacrifices ; and we know how some even of “Cæsar’s household” became Christian. They were to preach to Barbarians dead in trespasses and sins ; and we know how the heathen were won for Christ.

What, then, does the history teach but this, that when our Lord gave His great commission, and sketched His wonderful program, He gave also along with it a religion capable of universal adaptation ?

It is a fact that human hearts all the world over are one in their deep need of salvation. There is only one Gospel, and it is God’s infinite answer to the need of the human soul. It is not an argument, but an answer.

But what is the Christian Gospel ? In one word, which embraces everything, Christianity is Christ. We cannot separate Christ from Christianity. We



may take Buddha out of Buddhism, and a system remains; or we may take Confucius out of Confucianism and a system is the result,—but suppose we eliminate, Christ from Christianity, what would be left? It is clear that it is not a system of ideals, nor merely a body of dogmatic truth, but is in essence a life, a spirit, an atmosphere—the Divine life that came from heaven and lived on earth. The teaching of Jesus is the expression of Himself; His life exemplifies and expounds His teaching.

Now consider this. It is one of the secrets of the universal adaptation of the Christian Gospel.

i. *It presents the sublime picture of the only Perfect Life.*

John Stuart Mill admitted that the secret of the success of Christianity was in the picture of Jesus. Renan also was convinced that to “tear the name of Jesus from the world would be to shake it to its foundations.” But what is the real explanation of this influence? Buddha was gentle and good, but he does not win universal admiration. Confucius was wise and ethical, but his religion still remains local and limited. And why? Because they are not perfect characters. Human eyes are quick to detect imperfection, and these great teachers are found wanting. But the heart of man craves the vision of a perfect life; and when at last the picture of Christ is unveiled in the gospels, and cleansed eyes look on the Holy Face, then the longing heart leaps to kiss

the feet of its Lord. Christianity alone, in Christ, presents to man a character purely, perfectly harmonious. "In One alone has the Divine been so blended with the human that as the ocean mirrors every star and every tint of blue upon the sky, so was the earthly life of Christ the life of God on earth."

What a pure splendour His life is! How, in comparison with all other lives, it soars like some Mont Blanc far above the little hills that nestle at his feet! In every other life there is something little, but Christ is always great—always perfect. Even the artists cannot find a single human face as a model for the Divine. Leonardo da Vinci, in his picture of "The Last Supper," painted the form of Jesus, but could find no face for the picture; or we think of Barry carrying the ideal face in his imagination, and, touching his forehead, saying, "It is here!"

Now, it is this portrait of the Master framed in the gospels which is one of the secrets of the success of His religion. It has a constraining charm not only for the cultured of the schools, but for the simple and rude. Charles Lamb, the man of culture, owned the fascination when he exclaimed, "Gentlemen, if Jesus Christ walked into this room, we should all fall and kiss His feet!" And in far-away Africa is a Hottentot who was once an unlettered slave, darkly ignorant and degraded;

but one day he saw the picture of The Face, and was spellbound, and now he is a noble Christian man and a deacon of the Church !

And it will always be so. As long as the Gospel shows men this Divine portrait, they will yield to the resistless charm. It is the face of Christ that hearts everywhere are unconsciously looking for ; and when the " face of the unknown and perfect beauty " is unveiled, they instinctively cry, " Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God ! " Yes ; He who brings the Father into the focus of human vision, and is the Voice of the Eternal Word and the Glass of the Ineffable Light—He alone satisfies the great human heart.

" . . . The Soul

Which brings down God to man, the light to the world,  
He is the Maker, and is blest—is blest."

Thus Christianity gets differentiated from all other religions. It brings God down to man, while they strive to bring man up to God. It shows in Christ the living likeness of God ; and everywhere, as men see, they exclaim, " This is not the face of a man, but the face of God ! " Hence the secret of the universal fitness of the Gospel ; in the framework of its ethical teaching it holds the picture of the Divine life lived on earth.

Now, I think we may find another secret of the universality of the Christian Gospel.

ii. *It gives a vivid expression in Christ of how God feels.*

The great question of universal man is : Does this God of the fiery sun, and of the cold gleaming stars, and of the mighty forests, and of the terrible ocean, and of the awful forces, care for me ? Does He love me ? Everywhere that is the deep question of human life ; and man tries to propitiate the Deity, but Christ alone is the complete answer to the pathetic question. He is the vivid expression of how God feels for man. His Incarnation was the agony of the Divine nature in its effort to reveal itself. It is God's best and loveliest way of showing Himself to His sinning children. Redemption, too, is an eternal fact, expressed in time by the Holy Cross, in which God is again showing Himself ; and that which is ever implicit becomes thus explicit. "God is Love."

". . . How could God love so ?  
He who in all His works below,  
Adapted to the needs of man,  
Made love the basis of His plan,  
Did love, as was demonstrated."

It was a long way from the Throne to the Cross, and a long agony, but only thus could the unknown become known. The Father shows Himself not only in the character but in the cross of Christ. "God commended His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." What a story

it would make! What poetry and pathos and tragedy and victory! Think of it! The Father, hidden by necessity of His nature, hearing the ceaseless sobbing of His wandering children, and saying, How shall I show Myself to them? How make them see that I love them, and long for their redemption? How get a clear expression of Divine emotion that shall affect the imagination of sinful mortals? I will take a human body, like a veil, which, though concealing, shall reveal some rays of glory; and they will see, and say, This is Beautiful! and be drawn to Me in the Word made flesh. Then came the thought of the Cross: Love suffers for the object loved, and I must let them see how I, too, suffer in and for their redemption. They shall see in that Sacred Passion how I hate the sin, but love the sinner! Thus the problem was solved. You will recall that little poem, "One Word More," in which the poet shows that every artist longs for some other art in which to find language for his love. The painter fails, and would fain be a poet; and so he himself, in trying to express his affection, sighs that he has only the poet's art.

"This of verse alone, one life allows me;  
Verse and nothing else have I to give you.  
Other heights in other lives, God willing:  
All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love!"

Thus the Incarnation and the Atonement are the "one word more" of God to man—the final effort

to tell His own infinite love. Never again can man say, I know not how God feels !

And so we get the secret of the universal adaptation of the Christian Gospel. The perfect character supplies the ideal for man, and the sacred passion of His cross supplies the motive. A great painter left on the walls of his dingy cell a picture of the conquering Christ, white-robed, and breaking the barred gates, with a series from the first man to the last stretching hands of welcome to Him. "He shall wear upon His head many crowns."

It now remains to consider—

## II. THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO THIS DIVINE IDEA OF SAVING A WORLD.

i. *The Church, through its members, must incarnate the idea.*

Even this Divine idea, "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations," is practically useless unless incarnated. It is so with all ideas ; they may be beautiful abstractions, like filmy clouds shot through with colour, but, like the clouds, they will not bless the world unless they come down to earth. There is no lack of Divine ideas in the Church, for Christ has lavished them with infinite generosity ; but the great lack is, that we do not incarnate them. They float above us in the azure into which our Christ has gone, as if trailing clouds of His vanished glory ; but He gave the Church this idea that the Church might incarnate the idea,

without which it is practically useless. "Ideas are often poor ghosts. Our sun-filled eyes cannot discern them; they pass athwart us in their vapour, and cannot make themselves felt. But sometimes they are made flesh; they breathe upon us with warm breath; they touch us with soft, responsive hands; they look at us with sad, sincere eyes, and speak to us in appealing tones. They are clothed in a living human soul, with all its conflicts, its faith, and its love. Then their presence is a power, then they shake us like a passion, and we are drawn after them, with gentle compulsion, as flame is drawn to flame." \* This beautiful passage expresses exactly the relation of the Church to this Divine idea of saving a world—it must become incarnate.

See; the idea took "flesh" in Francis Xavier. In his dream there came to him the vision of his future—suffering and privation, continents to be traversed, swollen rivers to be crossed, and death haunting his path in the fierce rage of the heathen. But he saw the nations he would win for Christ, the islands and the continents and the empires, and he cried in his sleep, "Yet more, O my God! yet more!"—more of toil and pain, if only more souls might be won for Christ!

The idea took "flesh" in Carey when he said, "I must go to India." It certainly did not take

\* "Scenes of Clerical Life." George Eliot.

"flesh" in the wise man who replied, "Young man, mind your own business. When God wishes to convert the heathen, He will do it without your help!"

The idea became incarnate in David Livingstone when he calmly informed the London Missionary Society, "I am ready to go anywhere, provided only it be forward."

These are examples of the idea taking possession of the human soul and becoming the motive power of the life; but the whole Church must incarnate God's thought to save a world, and strive persistently to realise it. We cannot all go to the heathen, but we may all cherish the missionary spirit. The Church only lives by virtue of being a missionary Church. In the words of Max Müller: "The very soul of our religion is missionary, progressive, world-embracing. It would cease to exist if it ceased to be missionary, if it disregarded the parting words of its Founder, 'Go ye therefore and teach all nations.' The spirit of truth is the life-spring of all religions; and where it exists, it must manifest itself—it must plead, it must persuade, it must convince and convert. There may be times when silence is gold and speech silver, but there are times also when silence is death and speech is life—the very life of Pentecost. Look at the religions in which the missionary spirit has been at work, and compare them with those in which



any attempt to convince others by argument, to save souls, to bear witness to the truth, is treated with pity or scorn; the former are alive, the latter are dead."

But how may the Church incarnate the Divine idea?

ii. *By realising the mind of Christ.*

It was thus that Paul and Xavier and Carey and Moffat and Livingstone became missionaries. They sought to enter into the Sacred Passion of their Lord—that infinite pathos that brooded over men in their sin and sorrow—as well as into the rapture of His Spirit over the nations drawn at last to His pierced feet. They were made one with Him in the Divine idea of saving the world; His last command became their dearest wish, and they were willing to sacrifice themselves in a conquest so sublime. It is the only way by which Christian missions can be sustained and the program of Christ completed. We must get so near our Lord as to feel His sorrows over the lost, and enter into sympathy with His holy purpose to save a world. His thought must get vividly impressed on the mind of the Church, and become a beautiful, haunting dream, "Christ for the world," giving it no rest until the dream be realised. What Christ thinks and desires ought to determine the policy of the Church. No sacrifice ought to be deemed too great and no work too arduous in this enterprise.

Lastly, the Church may become possessed of the Divine idea—

iii. *By careful study of the history of missions.*

The success has been marvellous. How any one can know the real facts of the case and yet speak of missions as a "failure" is a proof of some subtle influence obscuring the judgment of the objector. Take one illustration in Fiji. A few years ago the people were savage and cannibal, and now, on one island, we find a large church built out of the walls of the former heathen temple in which the "devil-priests" held cannibal feasts; and yonder is the great stone on which human sacrifices were once laid, now used as a baptismal font! These are merely the outward signs of a people transformed in character and conduct and worship.

It is one illustration out of many of the fact that human nature can be regenerated by the one only Gospel. What fragile supports are to a decaying fabric human expedients are in the salvation of man. "You go into a Turkish mosque, and see the roof held up by a forest of slim pillars. You go into a cathedral chapter-house; there is one strong support in the centre that bears the whole roof. The one is the emblem of the Christless multiplicity of vain supports; the other of the solitary strength and eternal sufficiency of the One Pillar on which the whole weight of a world's

salvation rests, and which lightly bears it triumphantly aloft."

I would urge you, then, to have a share in the work of saving a world, that when you see your Lord He may know you as one who entered into His sorrow over the lost and into His joy over the lost ones found—that you may win the look, out of which heaven will blaze, as He says, "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

"Like the star  
That shines afar,  
Without haste,  
And without rest,  
Let each man wheel with steady sway  
Round the task that rules the day,  
And do his best!"

## IX.

### THE CROWNED CHRIST.

"But now we see not yet all things subjected to him. But we behold Him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God He should taste death for every man."—HEBREWS ii. 8, 9.

WE have in these words a contrast between the greatness of man and the supremacy of Christ. In the 8th Psalm the greatness of man is said to consist in the subjection of the material and animal world to him. The writer of the Epistle admits the greatness of man, but suggests that he had fallen short of the ideal—he had not yet realised his dominion: "We see not yet all things subjected to him." Then he proceeds, on this alleged greatness, to suggest an argument for the supremacy of Christ. Man, though great, had failed, but "we see . . . Jesus . . . crowned."

Let us look more closely into the subject, and we shall find the writer asserting two things :

I. THAT MAN HAS NOT YET REALISED UNIVERSAL DOMINION.

"We see not yet all things subjected to him."

See how true this is—

i. *In the realm of matter.*

We gratefully acknowledge the value of the discoveries in the physical worlds. Since the Epistle was written, how great has been the progress of Science! The dominion of man over matter is vast and most wonderful. A Kepler has traced the orbit of a planet, and with awe exclaimed, "I thought over again the thought of God!" A Franklin has drawn lightning from the clouds, and directed its course. A Young has suggested the wave theory of light. A Newton has discovered the force of gravitation. A Harvey has revealed the circulation of the blood. A Darwin has collected the facts on which the theory of natural evolution became possible.

The sway of man over nature is indeed vast and varied. He has explored the earth, discovered the properties of matter, and tabulated some of its mighty energies. He has broken up the light, which seemed indivisible, and, by means of the spectrum analysis, shown its component rays; he has distinguished their colours, and from the colours can tell the minerals in the sun. He has measured the distances of the planets and the sweep of their orbits. He has calculated with mathematical precision the birth of a new world into visibility, and predicted with unerring certainty the coming of a comet. He has given us a map of Mars with

mountains and lakes and channels, carved, doubtless, by vast snow-drifts. By added power to the telescope he has flashed into the field of vision countless worlds. By improved photography he has shown a section of the sky star-spangled. He has taught us that our world is but a speck in vastness thronged with great suns and systems, and thus exploded the notion of the ancients, that the earth was the fixed centre of the universe, round which the systems moved. We know now that the earth is whirling round the sun at the rate of sixty-five thousand miles an hour, "spinning like an angry midge in the abyss of its own small system, of which it is but one out of a hundred planets and asteroids, and of which the farthest of these planets rolls three hundred thousand millions of miles round the sun upon its sullen and solitary way." When David wrote of the greatness of man he knew of only two to three thousand stars; but now we know of fifty millions, and that our firmament is only one out of five thousand firmaments.

". . . Man may see,  
Stretched awful in the hushed midnight,  
The ghost of his eternity."

And yet, with all these wonderful discoveries of man in the realm of matter, how true it is "We see not yet all things subjected to him." He has not yet won universal dominion in the sphere of

the physical. Our scientists would be the first to admit that they have only gathered pebbles on the shore of that infinite sea in which the secrets of the universe sleep. There are sixty-five elements all round us as yet unexplained—mighty forces not yoked to the car of civilisation. There are diseases that still decimate, and science has failed to bring them into subjection. There are occult phenomena on the “border-land” which still await scientific elucidation. It is abundantly clear that in the realm of matter the dominion of man is not universal.

“The secrets of the gods are from of old  
Guarded for ever and for ever told—  
Blabbed in all ears, but published in a tongue  
Whose purport the gods only can unfold.”

“We see not yet all things subjected to him.”

ii. *In the sphere of life.*

Here, again, man's conquests have been great. By study of the varied species, and by close observation of their habits, and by humane treatment, man has brought under his sway many of the lower animals; they have become companions and helpers. And yet how obvious it is that his dominion is but partial, and fiercely disputed. The slimy monsters of the deep and the proud denizens of the forest savagely contest the right of man to rule. There is war, with tooth and claw; and we see not yet the animal world subject to the sceptre of man.

"We see not yet all things subjected to him."

iii. *In the sphere of mind.*

This is apparent when we reflect that man has failed to produce a religion or a philosophy capable of satisfying every side of his complex nature. Look at the time when this Epistle was written. It was probably written by Apollos—a cultured Jew, of the Alexandrian school. It is written in the finest Greek style, with delicate rhetorical points—all suggesting an author answering to the culture of Apollos. He was doubtless well versed in the pagan philosophies, representing the pathetic search of man for God, and containing the highest flights of the human mind into the infinite. It would be difficult to surpass the intellectual daring of Plato and Socrates and Aristotle and Marcus Aurelius in their philosophical and ethical speculations; and yet, in the effort to find God and to define man's relation to Him, they are all splendid failures. In that eagle flight of the best pagan minds to look into the face of the eternal sun we find their eyes dazed and their pinions weary as they fall back into the dim uncertainty of mortals, crying, with Plato, "We will wait for a Divine man." When Apollos penned these words, "We see not yet all things subjected to him," he surely must have had in his mind the pathetic failure of that wonderful philosophy to satisfy all the deeps of the restless human soul.



Let me give a picture of the failure of cultured paganism :—

It was an evening in old Rome ; the sun lay golden over the sea, and shot jewelled colours through the clouds, when two young men from the school of Pisa enter the imperial city. The one youth is Flavian, the poet, and the other is Marius, the future epicurean. Taking a boat, they row quickly across the bay to the site of an old Greek colony, and there, under the beetling crag where the moss gleams, they sit and talk of Greek culture ; or Flavian, inspired by the subtle charm of the golden evening, writes on his tablets the Latin verses which are still preserved for us. Then they return to the city. But Marius notes the flagging energy of his friend—the dimming light in those brilliant eyes ; and his concern is increased when Flavian, in the night, shows a burning spot on his forehead. Alas ! the terrible disease that ravaged Rome had seized him—it is like a serpent's fang in his brain ; and yet, at intervals, Flavian dictates his nuptial hymn to nature. At the close of the seventh day it is evident to Marius that he must soon lose his seraphic friend. There lies Flavian, calm and still, as if he had made some truce with death ; and there we see Marius, heart-broken, bending over the dying man, whispering, " Is it a comfort that I shall often come and weep over you ? " He faintly answers, " Not unless I be aware, and *hear you weeping.*"

There we get an illustration of the failure of philosophy to give any assurance in death of a living God and of life after death. Flavian, brilliant, poetic, dies, and the future is dark as starless night!

And what of Marius? When the body is cremated, we see him lovingly place the ashes in a small marble urn, and, wrapping it in his toga, carry it to the cemetery. But has Marius any hope? Pater says—"To Marius, greatly agitated by that event, the earthly end of Flavian came like a final revelation of nothing less than the soul's extinction. Flavian had gone out as utterly as the fire among those still beloved ashes." \*

It is a picture full of tears,—the pathos of life trembling on the verge of the unknown, with no gleam from the torch of human reason on that lonely way whither goes the soul of man. Wonderful was the philosophy, and great the ethics, of the devout pagans; and yet, such was the death of Flavian and such the despair of Marius!

We, too, have our philosophies, and their last word is "agnostic." Apollos might have written of the wisdom of man to-day, "We see not yet all things subjected to him." Apart from Christianity, our being is ever haunted with mystic problems out of the deep that cry, Is there a God? Does death end life? Man has failed to solve the problems and to lay the ghost of the future.

\* "Marius, the Epicurean." W. Pater.

Again, "We see not yet all things subjected to him."

iv. *In the sphere of the spiritual.*

It is abundantly evident that man has not yet won complete dominion in the realm of spiritual life. The progress of man has been great ; he has travelled a long way, and come up by slow degrees out of animalism—the life of mere instinct—into a rational being. We are grateful for the progress, though it has been slow. It is a wonderfully better world than when, in the not far-away time, the Cæsars cemented their throne with blood. Man stands to-day higher on the spiritual plane than ever.

And yet, great though the advance has been, it is pathetically clear that he is still far from having attained. Man still makes war on man, and, in love of sordid gain, with grasping greed distils death for his brother. As long as in our social system there is room for war and drink and gambling, it must still be written of man, "We see not yet all things subjected to him."

One is not surprised that Mr. William Watson, watching the faces of the people one Christmas day, and seeing there no touch of reverence or of gladness for the natal day of Christ, should have gone home to write, in half-despair :

"Fated among time's fallen leaves to stray,  
We breathe an air that savours of the tomb,

Heavy with dissolution and decay :  
 Waiting till some new world-emotion rise,  
 And with the shattering might of the simoom  
 Sweep clean this dying past that never dies."

We all feel at times the sadness of the poet at the slow progress of man ; but there is a corrective to despair. It is true that man has not yet realised universal dominion, but the writer of the Epistle asserts—

## II. THAT CHRIST IS DESTINED TO REALISE THIS UNIVERSAL DOMINION.

"But we see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man." Again, "That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

The writer sees clearly that the coming of Christ makes possible for man the heights of life—that now he may win a closer fellowship with God, and, defying evil, march to the great future as a son of God. He sees Christ crowned on the heights because He made all this possible for man, and in Him he sees the ultimate victory of the race.

But on what does this splendid vision rest ? Is it only a sweet dream of the cultured fancy of Apollos ? No ! The vision rests on the three granite pillars of the Christian Gospel—

### i. *The Incarnation.*

"We behold Him who hath been made a little lower than the angels." He was higher than the angels, and we have here an affirmation of the Incarnation. I cannot explain the mystery, but that God became flesh is central to the Christian faith and the ground of our hope. Humanity is not only in the Godhead, but God is in humanity, and it is incredible that the race should fail. If God had never touched our human life in Christ, and if man had no record of a slow but splendid progress, we might despair ; but the Incarnation is the corrective. A fact so august in the splendour of its veiled glory as to be almost incredible to our finite thought must change our whole estimate of human nature and its vast possibilities. In the ultimate thought of God man is great.

What, then, is that practical value of the Incarnation by which man may come to God ? It has many values ; but this is specific—*it humanises God*. It brings the eternal character into time ; it gives us a visible likeness of God ; it contains, therefore, in Christ, the ideal for man. "A light set in some fair alabaster vase shines through its translucent walls, bringing out every delicate tint and meandering vein of colour, while itself diffused and softened by the enwrapping medium which it beautifies by passing through its purity. Both are made visible and attractive to dull eyes by the conjunction." It is an illustration of the truth,

"He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." The soul sees in the pure manhood of Jesus the character of God, and it sees what it must become in the divine ideal. As the old legend tells of Prometheus bringing to earth, in a frail reed, a spark of celestial fire, so the Christ brought, in the frail reed of our flesh, the life of God.

The Incarnation thus gives the moral ideal for man, and such a fact carries vast spiritual possibilities.

The next pillar truth is—

ii. *The redemption.*

"That by the grace of God He should taste death for every man."

Now what is meant by redemption in its practical bearing on man? The keynote of redemption seems to be the possibility of sonship with God: "God sent forth His Son to redeem them that were under the Law, that they might receive the adoption of sons"; and that this sonship might be realised, Christ "tasted death for every man." Was it that the holy cross so revealed God's feeling for man that the lost child might see his Father in the sacred passion? "The nature of God is love. The love manifests itself by sacrifice. It is by a sacrifice of pain and effort that the nature of God is manifested to the world. To grow like that nature is to be redeemed. Because of the awful pain of that sacrifice which was accomplished on Calvary, . . .

Christianity has been called 'the worship of sorrow.' But that is a partial view of it; it is really, 'the worship of love and life.' " It is the manifestation, in the death of Christ, of that holy life and love of God that makes possible man's redemption from sin and return to the filial relation. Looking at the cross, man never can say, "God is doing nought for the world"; but he will see—what divine love has designed—the Father showing Himself, through pain, that man may be drawn into the filial spirit.

Thus the progress of the world—the ultimate victory of humanity—is bound up in the holy cross of love's pain. It is ever the symbol, in time, of the suffering of God for and with His children in their redemption. The lamb was slain "from the foundation of the world." Love always suffers with the suffering of the loved.

The last pillar truth is—

iii. *The priesthood.*

"For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."

In the Incarnation God came into humanity for its redemption, and now in the priesthood of Christ humanity glorified appears in heaven; and ever there is One who has suffered our temptations, and felt the hot pulse of our pain, and sighed with the feeling of our sorrow, and wept by a mortal grave, and at last felt upon His brow the night-dew of death!

Thus we have One in the mystical Godhead who stands for humanity, the High Priest who Himself was the sacrifice, and therefore He is "able to succour."

The addition of such a significant fact must make possible the spiritual progress of man. Though we see not yet "all things subjected to him," we see Jesus crowned, and the crowning of Christ involves the ultimate making and crowning of man. On these three pillars of the faith we may build our great hope and win the vision of man complete in Him. If redemption were a failure, Christ would lose His crown. The crown of man as a returning son of God *is* the crown of Christ. From this point of view we see what divine love has done, and we find the pledge of what is to come. The possibilities of man, in Christ, make despair impossible; and the outlook for our stricken world is bright with a growing dawn, as of the day of God.

"Prophet-eyes may catch a glory slowly gaining on the  
shade,  
Till the peoples all are one, and all their voices blend in  
choric  
Hallelujah to the Maker, 'It is finish'd: Man is made!'"



## X.

### THE CHARM OF CHRIST.

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich."—2 CORINTHIANS viii. 9.

THE Apostle is making an appeal to the Corinthian Church for a collection on behalf of the poor at Jerusalem. To encourage the spirit of liberality he reminds them that some of the poorest Churches in Macedonia had, out of their poverty, given generously to the distressed brethren; and then he concludes his appeal by citing the sublime example of Christ, who, "though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." If He could thus give away His riches to make them rich, they ought to follow the divine example of giving.

This is the most beautiful thing that the Apostle ever said of the Lord Christ. It gives us a photograph of the divine heart. It is a flash that illumines depths of Deity. It is the answer to the ever-recurring question, What is God like? "Show us the Father!" said Philip. Our Lord made answer, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father";

and St. Paul, seeing Him thus, in effect says, God is like that ; He was rich, and became poor for us.

I would take the text as showing the God-nature in the self-giving of Christ. And, first—

#### I. THE DIVINE PLENITUDE.

“He was rich.”

The Apostle clearly enough, whatever the German school may say, believed in the pre-existence of Jesus as the eternal Son of God, and he would here carry our mind back to a time anterior to His earthly poverty—a time when He was rich. The Corinthians, taught to believe in His pre-existence and eternal Sonship, would be quick to seize the point of the contrast between the heavenly riches and the earthly poverty. “He was rich” carries us up into the relation of the Son to the Father, and into the wealth He shared as Son, with the Father. He declared of Himself, “Before Abraham was, I am” ; and His loved disciple said of Him, He “was in the bosom of the Father.” Jesus Himself was deeply conscious of His Sonship, and spoke of His relation to God as a unity.

“The relations were not voluntary, but necessary ; the distinctions were not matters of choice, but of nature or essence. It is true that in order to the being of a son there must be a father, but it is no less true that in order to the being of a father there must be a son. Fatherhood is no older than sonship : the one is only as the other is. In

other words, if Fatherhood is of the essence of Deity, Sonship must be the same. And to Christ, God does not become Father: He is Father just as He is God; and He Himself does not become Son—He is Son, and were He not Son He could not be.”\*

But you ask, Why should God be Father? Why should not God live alone? The answer is: “God is Love; but love is social, can as little live in solitude as man can breathe in a vacuum. In order to its being there must be a subject bestowing love, and an object rejoicing in the bestowment. Without the active forthgoing, and the passive reflection and the return, it could not be; for absolute and simple loneliness of being would be a state of complete lovelessness.”†

It means that a lonely and a loving God cannot be. Love must have an object. Hence the relation of Father and Son in the Godhead. But whatever there is in the Father is, essentially, in the Son. The Son partakes of the nature of the Father. And this gives us a glimpse of the riches to which St. Paul is pointing when he says, “He was rich.”

We have now to try and realise some of the great things which are of the essence of Deity, and to remember that they belonged to the riches of Christ as sharing in the nature of the Godhead. What, then, are the riches of God?

\* “Christ and the Godhead.” Dr. Fairbairn. † Ibid.

i. *God is rich in omnipotence.*

Take the conception of space. Mr. Proctor says :  
“ It has been calculated that some of the stars seen with Lord Rosse’s telescope shine from such an enormous distance that light takes upwards of fifty thousand years in travelling to us from them. Now, consider for a moment the flight of a light-ray from a star at this distance on one side of our system to another as far off on the opposite side. For one hundred thousand years the light speeds onwards, each second sweeping over nearly two hundred thousand miles,—past stars and systems it rushes on ; but far away, on every hand, are other stars and other systems to which it comes not near. During three thousand generations of mortal men—if one can conceive that our race could last for that time—the pulsations of the ether are transmitted along the tremendous line which separates the two stars.”

Now what an idea that gives of the vastness above and around us : and remember that these heights and depths are all aglow with suns and systems ; every added power to the telescope has discovered new worlds, countless and varied and brilliant, as if diamonds flung out of the hand of God to blaze through darkness.

“ The great orbs cohere and spin on their measureless ways ;  
The great suns awaken and shine, ringed with girdles of  
fire every one ;

All the worlds are on fire and ablaze,—  
The flaming globes circle and whirl each one round its  
sun ! ”

And consider that the Almighty is responsible for these myriad worlds glimmering through space. He “created these things, that bringeth out their host by number : He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might.” Out of this we win our conception of the omnipotence of God. It is incredible that the universe should hang on nothing : *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. The force that operates everywhere is only another name for that will-force which is the energy of God. The stars are windows through which we look toward God and realise something of the awful power behind and within all nature.

Now the point of the argument is, That the eternal Son, sharing the nature of the Father, was rich in this essential attribute of omnipotence. In His pre-existence He was one with the Father in that eternal energy which is both the source and conservation of the things that are. St. John, who never questions the pre-existence of Jesus, affirms this unity of relation between the Father and the Son when he declares of the Son, “All things were made by Him ; and without Him was not any thing made that was made,” and specially adds, the “world was made by Him.” St. Paul confirms St. John when he says of our Lord, “He is before

all things, and by Him all things consist," and that God, by His Son, "made the worlds," and "upholds all things by the word of His power."

Here, then, we get our first glimpse of the riches of Christ in His eternal Sonship. He shared with the Father in omnipotence.

Now add to this—

ii. *God is rich in omnipresence.*

By omnipresence we mean that largeness of being by which the Deity is present, and fills all space, and is immanent in all matter. Hegel declared that matter cannot be conceived apart from thought, that matter is permeated with thought, and so, as thought presupposes mind and mind permeates matter, God must be immanent in the universe. Thus Wordsworth :

"I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thought."

Again, Goethe, when the earth-spirit says :

"Thus at the roaring loom of Time I ply,  
And weave for God the garment thou seest Him by."

Yet again, Tennyson :

"The sun, the moon, the stars, the hills, and the plains,—  
Are not these, O Soul, the vision of Him who reigns?"

Time and space have no limitations for God. God cannot be circumscribed by aught external to Himself. God is limitless, and fills all things.

Behind and within every world there is God—the secret of its order. There is order everywhere ; and as order suggests mind, we infer from the ordered universe the immanence or omnipresence of Deity.

“That very law which moulds a tear,  
And bids it trickle from its source,  
The same preserves the earth a sphere,  
And guards the planets in their course.”

Where order is, God is. “Order is law ; law is articulated reason, and articulated reason is God.” Science glories in tracing the “reign of law” everywhere ; but as “law” is only another word for “articulated reason,” God must be everywhere.

It is an overwhelming thought that in all the vastness and in all the worlds there is no spot where God is not. “Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee. . . . Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit ? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence ?” This shoreless sea of space is filled with God ; and life, even in its very dawn, has the flush of God upon it. Thus Browning :

“What I call God,  
And fools call Nature.”

And again :

“Thus He dwells in all,  
From life's minute beginnings, up at last  
To man—the consummation of this scheme  
Of being, the completion of this sphere  
Of life.”

And yet again :

“O Thou, the one force in the whole variation  
Of visible nature . . .  
A film hides us from Thee.”

Thus our best and purest poets are essentially Christian in teaching the immanence of God ; while the theory of evolution is a marvellous illustration and confirmation of cosmic theism. It was at first supposed to negative theism, but it is now scientifically admitted that evolution does not account for the origin of life, and is not a causal, but a modal, theory. Some who at first linked evolution with agnosticism, and barred its progress, are now finding the position untenable, and are reverting to Christian theism, with its revived doctrine of the divine immanence.

Thus we win the thought of omnipresence as an attribute of Deity. But Christ, as the eternal Son, partook of the nature of the Father ; so that we must think of Him as omnipresent with the Father in all heaven and in all worlds of matter and of mind : “He was before all things, and by Him all things consist.” “He was rich.”

Yet again—

iii. *God is rich in wisdom.*

“His understanding is infinite.”

Nature is an art gallery full of pictures of the skill of the Artist. There is not a flower of the field, or a blade of grass on the hills, or a shell upon



the shore which does not suggest divine wisdom. To eyes not blinded with the clay of materialism there are subtle hints of God all over this beautiful world.

“They saw Him in the shining of the stars,  
They saw Him in the flowering of the fields.”

There are “marks” by which the reverent souls know where His hand has been. “One of the most noticeable things concerning the beauty of God’s work is this, that it is never stuck on as mere outside show, but grows out of the nature of the things. Men often make a thing ugly at first, and then cover it up with paint or plaster or gilding to make it beautiful. God never does so. You will find no sham ornaments in His works. The shape He gives to each creature is just that which is fitted for it, and the colour with which He adorns it will never wash off. In His great workshop truth and beauty go together.”

“This is the glory,—that in all conceived,  
Or felt or known, I recognise a mind,  
Not mine, but like mine—for the double joy—  
Making all things for me, and me for Him.”

Thus we win our conception of the wisdom of God. Now we must add this to the riches of Christ, and think of Him as sharing the nature of the Father in His eternal wisdom: “Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.”

Yet once more

iv. *God is rich in generosity.*

He is a wonderfully generous God. As the universe depends on Him, He ever gives Himself to the dependent. The whole of the life of God is a life of sacrifice. He is the blessed or happy God because He is the self-giving God. In nature He gives with surprising prodigality, and in grace with loving generosity. In nature there is ever a royal giving :—" When trees blossom there is not a single breastpin, but a whole bosom full of gems and of leaves that have so many suits that they can throw them away to the winds all the summer long. What unnumbered cathedrals has He reared in the forest shades, vast and grand, full of curious carvings, and haunted evermore by tremulous music ! And in the heavens above, how do stars seem to have flown out of His hands, like sparks out of a mighty forge !"

Such is the prodigality of God in nature. And yet we must not forget that the world is only one flower dropped out of His paradise. It is something God

" Flung thee as truly as one rose  
Out of a summer's opulence  
Over the Eden barrier."

It was meant to suggest Eden and the wealth of God ; and we must not mistake the rose for the garden !

Then think of His generosity in grace. What

streams of life and light and love and gladness are ever flowing into human hearts from the fountain of divine grace: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Mr. Moody, in his address at Glasgow, testified to the lavish generosity of God in the gift of the Holy Spirit. Two good women had been praying for him. "And there came a great hunger into my soul. . . . Well, one day, in the city of New York—oh, what a day! I cannot describe it! I seldom refer to it: it is almost too sacred an experience to name. . . . I can only say, God then revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had *to ask Him to stay His hand.*"

And so, through nature and grace, we get glimpses of the great generosity of God: "God so loved the world that He gave . . ." The divine life is a capacity for self-giving. But Christ, in His pre-existence, shared the nature of the Father in this boundless generosity that delights to give of itself to all worlds and to all life. And so Christ was rich.

Now, taking these four conceptions of God, as omnipotence and omnipresence and wisdom and generosity, we begin to realise a little what the term "He was rich," applied to Christ as the eternal Son, means. Whatever the Father held, the Son held. In the Godhead He shared its wealth. His riches

in glory pass beyond knowledge. Who can measure the circumference of which God is the centre? We stand on the shore of a limitless sea, with bowed heads, exclaiming, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the knowledge and the wisdom of God!" The wealth of the Father was the wealth of the Son.

Now, with this glimmering meaning of the great words, "He was rich," consider—

## II. THE DIVINE POVERTY.

The contrast is startling! "He"—the eternal Son, who was rich in the qualities and powers of the Father—"became poor." He "emptied Himself." Now, if His riches consisted in sharing with the Father the attributes of Deity, surely His poverty must have consisted in the act of *self-limitation in the Incarnation*. I believe the words, He "emptied Himself," may be thus explained. For in what would the emptying consist if He still held and practised all the resources of Deity? But it seems clear from the records that the Incarnation involved limitation, self-imposed,—for only divinity can limit divinity,—but a limitation all the same. Our fleshly robe was not only a revealing but a concealing of Deity. The "Word" was made "flesh" that we might know the "Word"; and yet all of the "Word" could not utter itself, for spirit was cloyed by flesh. The body—the vehicle of the manifestation—was in itself the cause of limitation. Are we not justified, then, in concluding that the poverty

of Jesus lay not in the deprivation of His pre-existent powers, but in the limitation which the house of the body imposed. The house was too small for so great a spirit.

We think with amazing wonder of the great sacrifice of Jesus on the cross; but was not this His greater cross, and this the essence of His sacrifice, in the pain of self-imposed limitation? If we could penetrate the mystery of the holy Incarnation, we might find this voluntary limitation of His powers and privileges to be the secret of His gracious poverty. He could no longer be everywhere with His Father, in all worlds. He could no longer with His Father act as the great intelligence that stands behind not only the greatest but the smallest in nature. As the poet conceives, the ineffable name stands close, even to the infusoria :

“The power which pricked nothingness to perfection.”

And in leading it up,

“God tastes an infinite joy, in infinite ways.”

He could no longer share with the Father in placing the seal of infinite wisdom on every flower that blooms and on every star that shines. He could no longer with the Father, out of plenitude of power, revel in the prodigality of Deity; He had “emptied” Himself, and was poor; He had not lost His divinity, but it was circumscribed. He

could no longer do what once He did, now He had put on the fetters of flesh. By His own holy will He made Himself a prisoner in the house of the body. The sublimity of His sacrifice is in the act of the Incarnation. In that was the bitter cup of His passion and the holy pain of His cross. The moment He entered the flesh, He came into the limitation which made Him poor. The cup and the cross date back to that supreme moment when He cried, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." Deity contracted itself in order to reveal itself, and the contraction is at once the shame and the glory of Jesus: "He was rich, but He became poor." Reason staggers and imagination is borne down with the majesty of the thought; and the story only becomes credible in the light of eternal love: "God so loved . . . that He gave . . ."

Again—

*Jesus became poor as the son of man.*

The mother of His humanity was poor, and His cradle was a manger. His foster-father was a carpenter, and Himself an artizan. He never owned a house, but lodged with friends. He was so poor that no beggar, apparently, asked of Him alms. "His ordinary food was as simple as that of the humblest peasant: bread of the coarsest quality; fish caught in the lake, and broiled in embers on the shore; and sometimes a piece of honeycomb." He was so poor that He could not pay the

tax levied for the Temple service. He was poor *socially*. Isolation is the penalty of greatness. There was no one on earth—not His relatives, not His disciples, not even His mother—who could enter fully into His great thoughts and passion of feeling.

Jesus was a lonely soul on earth, unknown and rejected of men. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” His character of sweetness and light made Him different from all men, and set Him in a “solitary place.” He felt the loss of human sympathy, and what it was not to be understood. Thus, He who was rich became poor.

It is a most wonderful story: it is the romance of Christ, with its deep of pathos and height of sublimity. Dwelling in the bosom of the Father, and sharing, as Son, in the nature of the Father, He became poor: and yet that poverty is the mark of His divinity, and that shame is His glory, and that sacrifice makes Him King; so that to-day thousands would die for Him.

But now, what was the object of this wonderful act by which He exchanged heavenly riches for earthly poverty?

Consider—

### III. THE DIVINE PURPOSE.

That was a beautiful dream of the German poet, in which he was taken by a celestial guide through

trackless space,—on, past glowing worlds, until our earth lay a speck in awful depths. Still on they sped, by flaming suns, through a wilderness of worlds, threading their way out again into vastness, through which light shot like swords of flame,—still on, and up into galaxies of glory; when at last the dreamer cried, “O, Spirit, has the universe no end?” And the Spirit made answer, “It hath no beginning!” Again they sped on through silent space, and in vastness and darkness the dreamer cried, “Rest! rest! I am lonely in creation—I am lonelier in its emptiness.” But lo! his guide had vanished, and he was there alone among the lonely worlds. Was there no voice? Was there no God? Was there no love? Then there floated towards him a dark globe in a sea of light, and seated on the globe was a cross-crowned child; and the dreamer said, “I saw that the planet was this earth, and that the child was the child Jesus, who had come forth to comfort me, and who threw on me a look of gentlest pity and pure love; so that in my heart I felt a sudden rapture of joy which passed all understanding, and in the tumult of that happiness I awoke and thanked God for life.”

And so the universe, which is a manifestation of God, would only terrify us with its silent, awful energy, were it not that through the depths the Christ-child came to earth to make us rich. I can love such a God, and be glad. This is divine



altruism. If He were otherwise, He could not be called "Love"; but this coming in the holy Child makes Him for ever to us the beautiful God. He heard the cry of the human soul alone in the vastness, and He sent the Son of His wealth, who became poor to make us rich. But in what do His riches for us consist? The riches that come to us through His poverty lie in "weal" or wealth of soul.

You may be rich in classic culture and social virtues and material values, and yet be poor in spiritual qualities. You may be rich in poetry and song, rich with noble thought and high sentiment, and yet be poor in that deep life which we call spirit. A soul does not come to its wealth until God comes into it. Christ gives us wealth by giving us "weal"—*i.e.*, health, harmony of soul. His grace is that charm or rhythm of being which suggests tuneful accord of every side of His nature—the balance of life. In the poverty of His Incarnation we see and feel it best, and, drawn to Him, we find the lost chord, and we are made rich in harmonies of soul. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and yet not have the "weal" or well-being of Christ?

There is a legend of Thomas Aquinas kneeling before the cross, when a voice said, "Thomas, thou hast written and done much for Me. What reward shall I give thee?" Lowly he kneeled and said, "Lord, give me Thyself!" When we possess Christ

we get the true wealth, which is pure health of soul. That was the purpose of His coming and the grace of His poverty.

Moore, in his "Lalla Rookh," sings of a maiden to whom came a prince disguised in the garb of a poor poet ; but such was the grace of his bearing and the charm of his speech that he won her love, and it was only when arrived at the palace that she found the prince in the poet. The prince became poor that through his poverty she might be made rich. Thus came the Prince of heaven, in the "form of a servant," that He might win His bride, the Church.

By the charm of the condescension in which He became poor, He wins us to His wealth. "Ye *know* the grace." Yes, but have you responded ? Is Christ to you the real charm of life ? Is He the weal or wealth of your being ? Life without Christ seems so poor a thing ! Are you conscious of your poverty ? Then Christ says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." You never can know His riches of grace until you know your poverty of spirit. Even your poverty will appeal to Him. He made that pathetic sacrifice and came that long, lonely way to make you rich. I pray you, do not miss what Christ alone can give.

"He's better to us than many mothers are,  
And children cannot wander beyond reach  
Of the sweep of His white raiment. Touch *and hold*."

## XI.

### THE SCEPTICS AMONG THE DISCIPLES.

"But some doubted."—ST. MATTHEW xxviii. 17.

OUR Lord made an engagement with His disciples to meet them, after His resurrection, at a certain place, and apparently they had forgotten it. It was not until the two devoted women from the sepulchre, with the message of the risen Lord, reminded them that they recalled the lost memory. "Go, tell My brethren that they depart into Galilee, and there shall they see Me." Strange, that they should not keep such an engagement! But the explanation may lie in the fact that their grief had stunned their heart and blurred their memory. Possibly later, when grief had spent its force, they might have remembered; but now they were still under the shadow of His cross, with the vivid image of the pale face of anguish. Not until He sent the message, on the morning of the resurrection, were they roused from stunning grief. He would be waiting for them at the "trysting place," and they were still haunting the grave!

It touches a deep note.

We, too, when sorrow has veiled our eyes and closed our heart, linger by our graves, forgetful that our loved ones live and wait for us on the hills of light. Do not let your grief keep you weeping too long by the sepulchre of your buried love. Think of the meeting of the spirits—of the one awaiting you and calling you to the heights.

“More it is than ease,  
Palace and pomp, honours and luxuries,  
To have seen white presences upon the hills.”

Our Lord, in telling them where to meet Him, after His death gave them a delicate hint of immortality, but sorrow had so frozen them that the suggestion left no impression. Should we brood long over our “vase of chilling tears that grief has shaken into frost,” we, too, shall miss the rising sun. Should we linger long by the grave, and the mist of tears blind our eyes, we, too, shall miss the gleam of the “white presences” on the hills. The disciples were to go to the mountain, and “there shall they see Me.” We are to train our vision upwards. Down there are only the graves of all that is mortal, but up there on the heights are the immortals. “He is not here: He is risen.”

So the eleven disciples went to the mountain, and there they found Him, and worshipped; “but some doubted.”

The subject is the sceptics among the disciples.

It may help us if we analyse their doubt, and assign some reasons for it. The doubters were men of different temperaments: some were not spiritual; and others were strongly rationalistic, and demanded proof; and others, again, were deluded by wrong thoughts of the Christ and His mission. In these three types we shall probably find the explanation why some doubted the identity of the risen Master.

And, first—

#### I. BECAUSE THE SPIRITUAL CHRIST CAN ONLY BE KNOWN BY SPIRITUAL MEN.

They were not spiritual enough to recognise their Master in the changed form of His resurrection. He had, doubtless, greatly changed, and, indeed, seemed to pass through a series of changes until His ascension. His face would no longer look marred, but would glow with triumph. From the time our Lord showed Himself to doubting Thomas, having an actual body, with the prints of the nails and the spear, it would seem as if the mortal body slowly changed into the "body of His glory." It was a gradual undressing during those forty days, in which He dropped His mortality and was clothed with immortality. "There are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial."

Now, it may be supposed that "some doubted" because they did not recognise Him in this physical

change which passed over Him. Then, how was it that, while these did not know Him, there were others who did? There is a deep truth in that difference. Let me ask, How do we recognise a friend who has long been absent?—by physical identity? No; for many years may have passed and changed both form and features. How, then, do we know our long-lost friend? Surely by subtle spiritual expressions, by an old look of love coming into the eyes, or by an old familiar smile that wreathed itself in some favoured spot, or by some charm in the voice of long ago! By these “infallible signs” we know him; and they are not physical, but spiritual. Because he was our friend, and we knew him then, and held converse with him, we know him now, after these years, and we know him by spiritual identity.

Now, it seems clear that the disciples who doubted must have known “Christ after the flesh” and not after the spirit. If spirit with spirit had met, and they had known the spiritual Christ, there would now have been some winsome expression or sensitive tone by which they would have known Him, and no longer have doubted. They who knew Him depended for their knowledge not on the flesh, but on the spirit. Identity lies in the spirit; and, once knowing Him, they would know Him always.

We need to test ourselves by the same method,

and ask, Do I know the spiritual Christ so well that if He came to me in some changed form I should still know Him? George Macdonald once asked: "I wonder if we should know Him really if He came among us now, following the same rule—*i.e.*, if the revelation were befitting our time as His revelation eighteen hundred years ago fitted that time? If He came now to reveal His Father, should we know Him? Except we have come to Him in our heart, we should not know Him; except He is our life, except He is to us the power of our being, we should not know Him. We might perhaps know Him if we had got on a little; we might suspect it was He. I do not feel at all sure I should know Him. I should like to get so far before I die that I would most certainly know Him if He came—if He came according to the law of the time of this world, not with a halo of glory around His head, as the painters paint Him, but just like one of ourselves, doing the common work of the world. I cannot in the least trust myself that I should know Him. I can only hope that one day I shall be such that I should know Him. And that is another way of putting the end of our being; for to know Him is life eternal—not to know Him after the flesh, but to know Him as the living One, to know God in Him, and ourselves in God and in Him."

Thus the reason why "some doubted" in that olden time is, that they never knew, or at least never knew enough, of the spiritual Christ. They could never have questioned that He was the same Christ, any more than you could question the identity of your friend, if they had learned to know Him in fellowship of spirit. Then, may I say that this is the sure *corrective to our doubt of Christ*—as to whether He be alive now, or as to His divinity, or as to His power to work a miracle in the soul? The corrective to doubt on all these points raised by His personality lies in fellowship of spirit with Him. Once enter that holy place of the soul, and know Him as your "own," know Him in the light of love, and never more will you doubt that He is the Son of God and the Saviour of men. Christ is not known by syllogism—only by the heart that breaks its alabaster box of love at His feet. Oh! He is sensitive to love, and shows Himself in wonderfully beautiful ways! Love is the key to Christ and to the golden doors of the mystery of God. We know so little because we love so little. If we loved much, He would tell us much. Love is a capacity for God; and when we love, He tells us His secrets, and we know then with a knowledge more sure than the knowledge of the things we see. Christ wants to be loved that He may show us the things of God; and without love, God is the veiled God. If you know Christ, intellectually or traditionally or



ceremonially or poetically, *without love*, then you do not know Him in any real, inward sense of the word, and certainly you would not know Him if on the morrow He walked and talked in your street. But you would know Him if you had drunk deeply of His spirit, and thought His thoughts, and lived a little of His life. Then your spirit would know His spirit, and your mind His mind. *That* is the only kind of knowledge of Christ by which we are able to identify Him. It is spiritual and experimental, and belongs to the silences and the certitudes of the soul. The intellectual unrest of men is due to the fact that they do not know the spiritual Christ. The doubts that come as a cloud and darken the windows get driven away by one hour with Christ. It is the one sure corrective to materialism and pessimism and agnosticism. As soon as we know Him spiritually, and hear His voice in our loneliness, then the negations of the day are blown away by His breath, as the wind passing over the sea blows away the foam. The beautiful things of God come to us, not by way of the speculative reason, but by sanctified feeling. When we are as one soul with Christ, then come divine intuitions and experiences; and they form the basis of reason and spiritual certitude. I would that men might see that, in this high region, reason of itself can prove little! But when the *impressionisms* of Christ are deeply cut in the consecrated life, then

reason gets something vital and experimental from which to start. Feeling is that little child within the soul that leads blind reason into light.

Now you ask a crucial question : Is this spiritual contact and fellowship with Christ possible ?

It is so difficult to make that clear to one who has had no experience, just because it is an experience. But let me try, by way of analogy, to show how possible it is. It is now an accepted fact of psychology that there is a natural telepathy. Minds, apart from speech, act upon one another, and communicate ideas and impressions.

"I would ask you, Do you believe in the natural penetration of human souls by other souls? Do you believe that minds are in harmony with other minds?—that there is a tide in humanity whereof no single wave is isolated, but capable of being affected by the undulation of another, however distant?—that there are those far away whose love, whose griefs, whose warnings, whose sufferings, whose anticipations are more or less with you, and make themselves owned? And if we receive this natural telepathy, why should we not receive the *super-natural telepathy* of which our Lord speaks? I dare to say that if a created finite spirit can and does thus act upon another, then the divine Christ, our Lord, who loves us and knows us, can act upon us." \*

Thus our natural telepathy shows how possible

\* "Cambridge Address." Bishop Alexander.

telepathy with Christ may be. It is possible, for it is now taking place all over the world. There is a telepathy going on between Christ and His disciples, and the testimonies come with all the weight of cumulative evidence that "spirit with spirit can meet." If thus you know Christ, you will never be among those who doubt who He is or the possibility of fellowship with Him.

But again, "some doubted"—

## II. BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT SATISFIED WITH THE PROOFS OF HIS RESURRECTION.

We read that eleven disciples went to the "trysting place" in Galilee, and there they met Jesus; and while some worshipped, others doubted. Thomas must have been one of the eleven, and from what followed he was evidently among the sceptics; for he said with emphasis, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." The words "some doubted" must have included Thomas. Now, his doubt was more intellectual than moral; he was a good man and an honest sceptic, whose mind belonged to that order which can only be satisfied with actual demonstration,—that will not accept the testimony of others, but which insists on its own verification. Thomas wanted a demonstration, and proposed a practical test. There might be a counterfeit Christ—and hysterical persons are

easily deluded—and so he would put the resurrection of Jesus to an actual physical test; and when at last, apparently, his own finger was laid on the scar of the nails and the spear, this honest sceptic could doubt no longer, and voiced his great faith in the significant words, “My Lord and my God!”

Now, all the disciples were present, and knew of the doubt of Thomas, and witnessed the daring act by which he satisfied himself of the identity of the risen Master. It was so wonderful an experience, and so complete a demonstration for Thomas, that it got fixed in the minds of the disciples; and St. John, who was present, recorded the fact. But what is the value of such evidence?

The evidence derives value from the fact that it comes not from a sentimentalist, but from a rationalist—a strong-minded and purely honest sceptic; and, further, the value of such evidence must be tested by the motive. If it were shown that St. John and St. Thomas and the other disciples reaped worldly gain by preaching the gospel of the resurrection, then their evidence might be so far discredited; but for them it meant not gain, but loss: for St. John it meant banishment to the lonely isle of Patmos; for St. Thomas it meant, if the tradition be true, a life of toil and death in India; and for St. Peter it meant imprisonment and crucifixion. Men do not suffer bitter persecution and cruel death for a mere phantasy of the fevered brain,

or for a hallucination of the "delicate sensibility" of two gentle women who were early at the sepulchre.

And so the sceptic among the disciples was convinced by a physical test of the risen Christ, and worshipped Him ; and St. John, who was there and saw it all, has given us a simple detailed account.

*Is it true that you are still doubting* because you do not feel sure of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead? Are you doubting because it is impossible for you now to get the same kind of proof St. Thomas had? Then our Lord anticipated your case, and made it possible for you to have another kind of evidence that He lives, when He said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Now that is the evidence of the *spirit*, and the only kind of evidence possible to us, and of all evidence it is, for the person, the most absolutely convincing. I admit that it is not convincing to the man who has never known Christ after the spirit ; but even to him a cumulative argument ought to carry some weight. There are multitudes who at the present moment have never seen the Lord, but who know that He lives, and who feel the "power of His resurrection." How? Because they have risen with Him into newness of life and become "new creations," and in that new life they have the witness of the spirit that Jesus lives ; and,

further, they communicate with Him by spiritual telepathy, and are satisfied that He no longer sleeps under the "Syrian sky." If you talked with any one by cable in South Africa, the answers would satisfy you that the person was alive. Christ is much nearer. He is in close touch with His disciples; and they know that He lives, because He and they talk often with one another. They know that they are not talking to a dead Christ, but to a living Spirit, and *that* is the conclusive spiritual evidence of the risen Lord. You will never more doubt if you rise out of the grave of your dead self into the vitality of His life. If you cannot satisfy all the questions of a restless intellect, let them wait, and, meanwhile, get into spiritual relationship with Christ, and you will then find a kind of evidence of the heart that will go far to satisfy the intellect.

"For God above  
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,  
And creates the love to reward the love."

Yet again, "some doubted"—

### III. BECAUSE THEY HAD FORMED WRONG CONCEPTIONS OF THE CHRIST.

The two disciples walking to Emmaus in sorrowful doubt supply an illustration. What a pathetic picture of vanished ideals and lost hopes and buried joys gets framed in the words, "We expected it was He who should redeem Israel!" In their

hearts they still love, and are loyal to, Him ; but they feel sure that He is lost to them. Was He not even then lying still and cold in the sepulchre ? So they thought and so they doubted. Their doubt was not caused by Jesus, but by their mistaken thought of Him. They looked for a temporal reign and the freedom of Israel, and because Jesus did not answer to their thought and desire, they doubted that He was the Messiah. He might come back to them in their dreams, but with the morning there would be the dead Christ ! But we see how He comes back ; and, knowing they were still loving and loyal, He opens to them the Scriptures and shows them how they had formed wrong ideas of Himself and His mission.

Now, often our doubts are due to the wrong conception or false dogma we have formed of the person and the work of our Lord. We must learn to correct all this by the knowledge that Christ does not come to us in our way, but in His own way. We must not formulate a system for Him, or plan a method by which He shall come and by which He shall work. If we learn to know well the Spirit of Jesus, we shall detect His presence, whenever He may come, in new ways and new thoughts, and in the wider order and clearer vision. " Doubt is the child of limited sight, but the vision of Christ is universal light. It reveals all things : it creates an order in the world ; it puts meaning

into things ; it tells me how to get out of my evil and sin. And as the vision of Christ clarifies our individual life, so it clears up and explains the whole world. It is like standing in the sun, where all the planets are seen moving in harmonious orbits, vast but simple, many and unlike, but clear at the first glance."

"Blessed are your eyes, for they see."

"I find earth not grey, but rosy,  
Heaven not grim, but fair of hue.  
Do I stoop ? I pluck a posy.  
Do I stand and stare ? All's blue."



## XII.

### THE MEANING OF THE TEARS.

“And when He drew nigh, He saw the city and wept over it.”—  
ST. LUKE XIX. 41.

OUR Lord is walking from Bethany to Jerusalem, when the city, hidden by an angle of the road, suddenly flashes upon Him. There stands the Temple, with its marble pinnacles gleaming like snow in the sunlight, and the golden splendour of the roofs making a dazzling brightness. Josephus says it made those “who forced themselves to look upon it at the first rising of the sun to turn their eyes away, just as they would have done at the sun’s own rays.”

As our Lord looked on this sacred shrine of a nation’s pride, with all its great and tender memories, a rush of feeling shook His soul into weeping. The incident is a revelation. The tears are luminous with the passion of the divine heart.

And, first—

#### I. THE PHILANTHROPY OF CHRIST.

“He saw the city, and wept over it.”

Doubtless the city itself, with its long history, and

His Father's house, with its pathetic memories, would affect Him deeply, as He voiced their impending doom. But His love struck through all, and He saw the living men and women of the city. The stones of the beautiful house were precious, but more precious to Christ were the sinning souls. Over men He wept,—the men who had lost their day of grace. The incident shows the divine philanthropy. In this special case it was love for His own nation heedless of the coming Nemesis.

But it is clear, from the teaching and the miracles of Jesus, that He loved man as man, independently of creed or class or colour. Does not that make the ethic of the Evangel superior to the ethic of any other religion? Paganism taught patriotism, but not philanthropy. The love of humanity was so little known among the pagans that paganism contains no word for love—in the evangelical sense. They had a word, but it carried another signification; and when Jesus came, with His pure morality, teaching the fair brotherhood of men, He dropped the old classic word, which had lost its purity, and He took another word and charged it with His own ethical spirit. The classic word, it is said, is never used in the New Testament. It had been degraded, and could not be used as the vehicle of His Evangel—of that pure passion which Jesus felt for every man. How little even the

great pagans knew of love! Cicero was a stoic; and, though we owe much to the "stoical jurists," we cannot help seeing how distasteful to their philosophy was the expression of love. Cicero left us nearly four hundred letters, and it is significant that in all these letters he never once mentions his mother! And you know how stained the Latin literature is with unnatural cruelty to little children. Take one illustration from the writings of Seneca, who, though his ethical sayings are so pure, wrote this passage without colour of emotion: "Children, too, if weak and unnaturally formed, . . . we drown. It is not anger, but reason, thus to separate the useless from the sound."\* But it is only fair to say that Seneca denounced the horrible practice by which little children were maimed and then publicly exhibited at the Lactarian column to excite compassion. With a burst of fine indignation he exclaims: "I should like to know that workshop of human misfortunes,—these shambles of infants!" And yet this philosopher could write calmly of drowning weak and deformed children for social reasons! Such was paganism. It had few tears for the lives wrecked by weakness and pain. It believed only in "the survival of the fittest." It glorified patriotism, but it was destitute of philanthropy.

Passing to *Judaism* we get at once a higher

\* *De Ira*, i. 15.

morality. The Jew was under obligation to care for the "stranger within the gates," but it was often more a theory than a practice. The law had not yet been illustrated by the passion of a life. It was not until Jesus came that the implicit philanthropy of Judaism was made explicit. Jesus breathed the passion of His own love of humanity into the old morality, and widened it into "Love your enemies." He loved man as man, whether Jew or Greek or Roman. He saw the race as a solidarity. He wept over universal man refusing to be redeemed, and His cross is the symbol of a universal redemption. The tears of Jesus on Olivet were only the spray of the tidal feeling that surged within Him for mankind. It was His work not to depreciate patriotism, but to charge it with a new content—the passion of His own love—so that it grew to philanthropy. It is clear that He saw man as a whole. He saw man in his physical suffering and mental slavery and moral poverty, and the result was a sacred pity for man, ending in the sacrifice of Himself.

Now, doubtless, we all hold theoretically the philanthropy of Jesus, and we admit the idea is beautiful, but we Englishmen are slow to put the idea into practice. At the risk of offending, I would venture to say that philanthropy, in the sense of the Evangel, is not a striking virtue of Englishmen. We are intensely patriotic, but can scarcely claim to be

philanthropic. We are not distinguished for our love of, and courtesy to, foreign nations ; on the contrary, we are thought to be isolated and exclusive, and too often cynical and contemptuous. We do not love ; and need we wonder that we are not loved in return ? It is true that we have a great history, in which we have struggled for liberty ; and the sun never sets on the empire of our Queen ; and we have a beautiful literature : but why should all this tempt us to a "splendid isolation" ? Why should we curse ourselves with the pride that can see naught of goodness or of greatness in other people ? It is this exclusiveness which is our great danger. Exclusiveness is the deadly foe of philanthropy and the spirit of it gets finely voiced in Tennyson's "Palace of Art," where the solitary soul, looking through oriel windows, can speak of men as "swine" !

"O, God-like isolation which art mine,  
 I can but count thee perfect gain :  
 What time I watch the darkening droves of swine  
 That range on yonder plain."

"Splendid isolation" is the death of humanitarian instinct. We need not look far for an illustration. Our nation stood silently by and allowed the "great assassin" to butcher one hundred thousand Armenians ! Well, the decadence of philanthropy is only the symptom of the disease which threatens patriotism. When we cease to care for the oppressed of other peoples, we shall soon cease to care for our

own. Is the disease already working? Is the exclusiveness of England abroad leading to selfish indifference at home? When we look at grinding poverty side by side with grasping wealth, with scarcely any effort to improve the economic relations, we begin to ask whether practical sympathy is not shrivelling in the heart of theoretical philanthropy!

I do not know whether Robert Browning, in "Paracelsus," wished to teach us that lesson, but it is there clearly enough. Paracelsus is a gifted man, with wonderful aspirations, who would fain pass as a philanthropist without the essential quality of sympathy. If he should show sympathy, men will want to do him service, and his proud, exclusive spirit resents it.

". . . I seemed to long  
At once to trample on, yet save, mankind ;  
\* \* \* \* \*  
Yet never to be mixed with men so much  
As to have part even in my own work,—  
Share in my own largess.  
\* \* \* \* \*

If I can serve mankind,  
'Tis well ; but there our intercourse must end :  
I never will be served by those I serve."

His exclusive spirit makes him stand apart from men ; but the Nemesis comes, when dying, in his remorse and repentance. He sees the folly of his "splendid isolation," and pathetically asks that in death he may not be divided from his fellow men, but find a grave among the lowliest.

“ . . . Dear Festus, lay me,  
When I shall die, within some narrow grave,  
Not by itself—for that would be too proud—  
But where such graves are thickest ; let it look  
Nowise distinguished from the hillocks round,  
So that the peasant at his brother’s bed,  
May tread upon my own and know it not ;  
And we shall all be equal at the last.”

We must beware of that colourless philanthropy which, while professing the desire to help men, is, in its aristocratic exclusiveness, devoid of practical sympathy. To limit love to our own nationality is to destroy its quality of expansiveness, with the danger of its shrivelling in our own hearts. The self-contained and self-centred nations are already passing into decadence, while the nations thrilling with passion for humanity, aiming to right its wrongs and break its fetters and send it on the march of freedom, are the nations with whom the future lies. The great moral forces are not on the side of national powers that have no arm nor voice for brutal massacre and fiendish outrage ; they are on the side of those who strike for freedom and righteousness, and they work unseen, often with terrible swiftness. The best men in our English life see this clearly, and are filled with moral indignation that England should ever be on the side either of cynical tyranny in Armenia or grasping greed in Matabeleland. If our patriotism has become so gorged with gain as to stifle philanthropy, then perish such patriotism !

“It is an indication of the highest moral progress when nationality ceases to be the limit of sympathy, when the oppression of the remotest nation begins to appeal to us with a sense of personal injury, or when the story of a great act of injustice done to a single human soul breaks down the barrier of national exclusiveness and evokes from all hands a cry as of pain and indignation for a universal wrong. In such incidents there is a witness to the slow advance of mankind towards that ideal of goodness which Christians have ever recognised in One who loved all men with a love more intense than the love of kindred and country, and who offered up life itself a sacrifice for the redemption of the world from evil.” \*

Such was the sublime philanthropy of Jesus, “He saw the city, and wept over it.” He saw the coming Nemesis in the armies of Vespasian. He heard the long wail of a shattered people in the ruins of their once beautiful Temple. He saw the sufferings of a nation writhing under the heel of the Roman conqueror, and there “came o’er His God-like soul that soft upbraiding; and Jesus wept”—wept with pathos too deep for words.

The philanthropy of Christ is the compassion of love that embraced not alone His own nation, but universal man. The tenderest scenes in His life are those in which He touches, with His own sensitive

\* “The Philosophy of Religion.” Professor Caird.



hand, the sufferers of the world. Then His eyes melt into softness, and His tones are musical with love's pity. The pity of Jesus is the sacred fire of His Evangel, and, warming our cold hearts there, we shall learn to love men everywhere, and no longer pride ourselves on a "splendid isolation" that lives within the narrow walls of a selfish patriotism.

"Where is the true man's fatherland?  
Is it where he by chance is born?  
Doth not the yearning spirit scorn  
In such scant borders to be spanned?  
O, yes! his fatherland must be  
As the blue heaven wide and free!

\* \* \* \* \*

"Where'er a single slave doth pine,  
Where'er one man may help another,—  
Thank God for such a birthright, brother,—  
That spot of earth is thine and mine!  
There is the true man's birthplace grand,  
His is a world-wide fatherland!"

I now pass from the philanthropy of Christ to another meaning of the tears. The tears reveal—

## II. THE HUMANITY OF THE FATHER.

"He wept."

Now, what was it that wept? It is said, The nature of Jesus! But it is a primal truth that the nature of Jesus is the nature of the Father. It seems simple; but the dogmatic theologian will make it complex. He forms two compartments, and labels the one "human" and the other "divine,"

and this he does often in the most arbitrary manner. One set of actions he will ascribe to the human nature, and another set of actions he will ascribe to the divine nature ; and he would thus have us pause to analyse and classify the tears of Jesus !

It is both arbitrary and bewildering. It is much more simple and scriptural to say that Christ had only one soul and not two souls. Out of the essential unity of His personality He says, "I and My Father are one." What else can that mean but that the nature and character of Jesus are the likeness of the nature and character of God ? He came to show us the Father ; but if His essential nature is different from the nature of the Father, then the revelation is precluded by that difference. Or, if I am to distinguish between the human and the divine in His personality, then I lose the value of His sacred tears. Is it not a simple fact that the human runs up into the divine, so that no man can say where the human ends and the divine begins ? Christ is the full value of God bodily. I have no knowledge of the nature of the Father apart from the nature of the Son. When asked, Do you believe in the divinity of Christ ? I reply, It is the one great fact in which I do believe. God pulses in the heart of Jesus. God looks out of the eyes of Jesus. God speaks through the lips of Jesus. God took a human form and transfigured it, as sun through clouds. And so

Christ, showing us the Father, shows us His perfect humanity. When I was a boy they taught me the attributes of Deity, and God seemed always cold and grand and stern : I do not know that I ever loved Him. But Jesus had a wonderful fascination for me. I think I feared God, but I loved Christ. Then the years passed ; and one beautiful day I came to see the meaning of the tears, and that they were equally the tears of God. Then, one of those sacred tears was far more precious than all the "abstractions" which had been taught me.

The tears of Jesus crystallised the humanity of the Father. The nature that wept in Him is the nature of God, and it is the divine humanity. The fact is only a gleam of the infinite sun, but it makes all life, with its sins and sorrows, different. We see the divine heart in tears over the pathos of human life. It was holy love that wept on earth over men ; and is there aught better in heaven than holy love ? So the humanity of the Father becomes the hope of the world. Because God is like Jesus, hope soars, and sees man, in the far-away time, crowned.

God is no longer a cold abstraction, but a presence, warm and tender. Jesus in tears shows Him not only in His imperial majesty, but in His tender humanity. "To me Jesus is the exposition outwardly of the inward life of God. . . . I free

from my thoughts as one frees a weight from the soul, the earthly circumstance of Christ's life. And then I say, This is the trait, this is the quality, this is the divine nature ; and then I enthrone it in the Father,—I enthrone it in the Holy Ghost, and the whole earth doth show forth what the centre of the universe is. In Christ alone can I gain any adequate conception of what is the sum and centre of God Himself." \*

Now, that is the method of interpreting God, not through theology, but through Christ, and the first result is that it gives us the humanity of the Father. It is not too much to say that in our fuller recovery of Christ we have rediscovered God. To the august conceptions of the eternal sovereignty and awful holiness we have added the finest human qualities, the tender pity and sweet gentleness and tearful sympathy of Jesus ; andso we have found our Father in the Son.

The truth has many applications ; but the most precious is *that it brings God so near to us.*

We begin to feel that no mother brooding o'er the cradle of the helpless child whom she must lead out of weakness into strength can compare with the compassion of the holy Father, who overhangs the race in its infancy and ever guides its steps on into manhood. We feel that no earthly father, weeping over the wrecked boy of his home,

\* Henry Ward Beecher.

can adequately express the pity of God over the sin and the suffering of His children. We feel that no heroic nurse, walking the wards of the hospital and smoothing the pillow of the sufferer, can fully reveal the divine humanity weeping o'er the sickness of our world.

It is a truth full of consolation because it is full of compassion. I want you to know its value. To see the humanity of the Father in Jesus is to know the consolation. And you need it! You are often lonely and despondent, the colour of life is grey, and you walk among the graves of dead hopes ; but should you in the tears of Jesus see the humanity of God, light will shine through the gloom and brighten into glory.

“I say the acknowledgment of God in Christ,  
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee  
All questions in the earth and out of it.”

### XIII.

#### THE VALUE OF A CHILD.

"And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased."—ST. MARK iv. 8.

THESE are parables of the Kingdom under the similitude of the seed and the sower and the soil. The seed is the Word of God, and the sowers are the workers, and the soil is the human heart. There are varieties of soil indicated by four graphic pictures.

##### *The wayside.*

Here we find the soil trodden and the seed lying on the surface. It is the picture of the hard heart that must be broken by God's gentle rain or by grief's cold frost ere the seed of life can enter.

##### *The stony ground.*

Here we get a slab of rock with only a thin coating of earth. As the seed cannot strike deeply, it soon withers away. It is the picture of the heart on which truth has only a superficial hold, the blade of promise appearing only to be scorched by some fiery sun of evil.

##### *The thorny ground.*

This suggests ground not yet cleaned. The soil may be good, but the noxious weeds starve the seeds. The weeds are the "cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things."

*The good ground.*

In this picture we get both depth and cleanliness of soil. It is the symbol of a heart deep and tender and pure and receptive. In such soil the holy seed grows into a harvest of life.

Now, I would take the "good ground" as suggesting the value of a child, and impress the advantage you have in dealing with the soil of childhood. And, first—

I. THE CONDITIONS OF CHILDHOOD ARE  
FAVOURABLE TO THE RECEPTION OF TRUTH  
SEEDS.

In the "good ground" there are three essentials :

i. *The soil is receptive.*

Sun and shower must be able to penetrate if the seed sown is to germinate. It is so with human hearts. But the period of childhood is the most receptive. The moral nature is sensitive ; it has not yet been coated by conventionalism, nor has it suffered the contortions of passion ; it is not suspicious of men, nor sceptical of truth. Some one has cynically said, "Only children and idiots tell the truth." What falls on the heart leaps to the tongue. The child-nature is plastic as molten metal, and, as moulded metal retains its shape, so

character often gets fixed, for good or for bad, in early life. The influence of the parent is often the mould of the child. Byron's mother was proud and sour, and so was Byron. Nero's mother was a woman of criminal instincts, and so was Nero. Washington's mother was a saint, and he inherited her virtues. But of all influences, the child is most receptive of *silent influences*. Carlyle, with his swift intuition, saw the value of "silent lives." Conduct, which forms so great a part of life, is the silent sower over the receptive soil of childhood. We should give ourselves pause, and ask, What kind of seed is my conduct sowing? "Tell me," said one to a wretched man, "where did you take the first step downward?" "At my father's table," he replied. We are responsible for our silent influence—for the invisible seeds of conduct. It is a terrible thing to sow into the hearts of children the seeds of death. Even Heine, with his often cynical pessimism, sang of the care that should enfold the innocents:

"O little lamb, I was assigned  
To be thy shepherd true and kind;  
And 'mid this barren world and rude  
To shelter thee as best I could.  
I gave thee of my bread thy fill,  
I brought thee water from the rill;  
And through the raging winter storm  
Safe in my bosom kept thee warm."

As an example of silent influence we have the letter of Seneca, written of Helvia, his mother.



She had escaped the temptations not altogether peculiar to her age, and such was the effect of her conduct upon her son that in later life he wrote : " You never stained your face with walnut juice nor rouge. You never delighted in dresses indelicately low. Your single ornament was a loveliness which no age could destroy. Your special glory was a conspicuous chastity." Such was the charming testimony of Seneca to his mother. What she was doubtless gave those ethical qualities to the " sayings of Seneca " that make their lasting value.

". . . Happy he  
With such a mother ! Faith in womankind  
Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high  
Comes easy to him, and, though he trip and fall,  
He shall not blind his soul with clay."

Such the influence of a good mother. And recently Mr. J. M. Barrie has sent us all into tears over that perfectly beautiful picture of " Margaret Ogilvy." You can see that she haunts his life like a pure spirit, and is the making of her son. " For when you looked into my mother's eyes you knew, as if He had told you, why God sent her into the world ; it was to open the minds of all who looked to beautiful thoughts. . . . Those eyes that I cannot see until I was six years old have guided me through life, and I pray God they may remain my only earthly judge to the last."

Oh, mothers, your influence over your children defies analysis! It is the subtle atmosphere in which they live—or, it may be, die. They can never forget *you*. The image that shall live with them through the years is the image of yourself—of what you are. Your face will haunt them in after years,—then let it be as a beautiful image framed in the pure heart of your child, to be its most precious memory in old age.

“A child,” says Brand to Agnes, “is as clear of stain as a tarn in the summer sunshine. A mother can hover over it like the bird which, on its silent flight, mirrors her beauty in its deepest depth.”

This receptivity makes the value of the child.

Now, take the second essential of the “good ground” of childhood:

ii. *The soil is rich.*

In Africa there was once a waste of sterile land, relieved only by the stunted karroo; and when the sun set in a golden glory, the little shrub blushed red, as if asking, Why am I here? The dreary waste stretched far away in billows to the horizon, and looked as if some “prentice hand” had practised world-making. The fine descriptive genius of Olive Schreiner has painted the karroo with the colours of heaven; but as I crossed it under a blazing sun, I missed the poetry, and it seemed to me a sad waste of creative energy.

Over that same loveless land there wandered one day a child who, short of marbles, went in search of pebbles, and played with them on the earthen floor of his father's house. A passing stranger, who watched the game of pebbles, caught the gleam of a sun hiding within the crystal, and knew that it was a diamond! Then the scene changed. Prospectors came, as if in fond love with that sterile land! Why? Because it held in a once fiery heart priceless gems—it was the cradle of fabulous wealth.

Now, there is another field—the field of childhood—which is rich with undiscovered worth. Lewis Morris caught the gleam of the diamond when he sang of the child:

“Thou bearest with thee hidden springs of force,  
Creative power, the flower, the fruitful strife,  
The germ, the potency of life.

\* \* \* \* \*

To thee time giveth to beget  
The thought that shall redeem and lift man higher yet.’

There are possibilities hidden deep within the child, and the wise teacher will look for the diamond. Childhood is rich in two things:

(i.) *In intellectual possibilities.*

That in the children of to-day we get the men of to-morrow is a platitude, and yet it may be worth our serious thought. That such thought is being given is shown by the education controversy.

The minds that shall grapple with the problems ever with us are now in our homes. The mental forces that shall shape, for good or for evil, the future of England's life are now in our schools. In the brain-cells of the little child are cradled the slumbering powers of intellect. An old German professor, on being asked, Why lift your hat to the children? replied, "Because I see in them the statesmen and professors and poets and preachers of the next generation." And among the wise sayings of Confucius we get the maxim: "A youth is to be regarded with respect. How do we know that his future may not be equal to our present?" And He who is the greatest said, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Now, the secular teachers will train the minds of the children; but are our schools to become purely secular, as some seem to advocate? Are the children to be educated *minus* religion? God forbid! Secular education divorced from religion means atheism and anarchism. Marie Corelli, in "The Mighty Atom," has painted, in startling colours, the results of the denial of religion in the training of the young. It is here that the primary responsibility falls on the Churches and the Sunday schools. You have to inform them with

the knowledge of God, naturally and historically revealed, and to trace the progressive revelation to its highest manifestation in Christ. You have to inform them with the time and the place and the growth of the sacred library, and how the books are authenticated by contemporary events, especially in archæology. You have to drill them in the history of the Christian Church and their relation to the Kingdom of God. Thus far you will deal with the mind of the child; and you will find it rich, for, as Mr. Andrew Lang says, "Every child is a genius."

But the value of the child consists chiefly—

(ii.) *In spiritual possibilities.*

You are not teaching an animal, but a spirit. You are not working on plastic matter, but on a living soul. What is a human soul but a capacity for God? Its value lies in its capacity. It is a spirit, and God is a Spirit, and God and the child may meet.

Let me make that thought vivid. See! God made our earth, and it was "good," with its flowers and fruits and beauty of sky and sea. God breathed into the wastes of "silence and sleep," and His breath wreathed itself into those glowing worlds; and each added power of the telescope serves to reveal world upon world, firmament upon firmament, as if the floor of His feet were a mosaic of stars, and in subdued awe we cry, "God, Thou art

great!" And yet, what is matter, with its ever-changing forms compared with spirit? Man, standing in the midst of all the forces of nature, knows that he is greater, and can control them. Mr. Ruskin tells us that "the creation of such a system as a high human intelligence, endowed with its ineffably perfect instruments of eye and hand, is a far more appalling manifestation of infinite power than the making either of seas or mountains."

A human soul is greater than all the worlds, for it can commune with God. Strange, mystic life, with its ever-beating pulse! The last wave of time will break on the shore of eternity, and all the fiery worlds will die into cold cinders, but the soul shall live. There will be God and the Soul. There is no death for what men call "I." Death may seize the body, but it cannot touch the spirit. God alone must put His finger on the pulse. Will He? The materialist, who professes to explain all of being "from gas to genius," says Yes. But instantly the "heat of inner evidence" leaps like a flame within, and shrivels the base suggestion. Tennyson gave voice to the *undertone* of the great human heart when he sang :

"What is it all, if we all of us end but in being  
Our own corpse-coffins at last,  
Swallowed in vastness, lost in silence, drowned  
In the deeps of a meaningless past?"

Or, should you prefer a philosopher to a poet, we get the conclusion in Mr. Fiske's admirable book on "Man's Destiny" :—"The materialistic assumption that . . . the life of the soul accordingly ends with the life of the body is perhaps the most baseless assumption that is known to the history of philosophy."

The verdict of science, though negative, favours immortality. The life of the soul, which, refusing to be circumscribed, leaps the bounds of time and space, can only be explained on the assumption that it is keyed to a spiritual world.

"My own dim life should teach me this,  
That life shall live for evermore,  
Else earth is darkness at the core,  
And dust and ashes all that is."

It is incredible that a human soul, with all its intuitions and wistful yearning, is but spray flung out of the deep to reflect the light of other worlds, and fall back into the dead sea! No: because God is, we are, and must be. We are made in the image of His personality, and it is incredible that God should strike His own image, though marred, into nothingness.

Thus, as teachers, you have to deal with a young, immortal spirit. To you the Master commits the training of His children, saying first and twice, "Feed My lambs." Their salvation is largely in your hands. I beg you to place your-

self in close personal relation to your scholars, and help their will to decision. They are rich with the possibilities of "eternal life," but to have an immortal existence without eternal life is a horror too awful to contemplate.

Consider, again, in relation to the soil of childhood—

iii. *The soil is free.*

It is free from the growth of previous harvests and of noxious weeds. To have the first use of such soil is great gain, for the first seeds get the advantage. There was once a boy whose mother allowed him to amuse himself by killing flies. The seeds of cruelty were thus sown, and the boy became Nero the matricide.

John Pounds and Robert Raikes knew the value of the free soil of childhood, and the old rabbis would not partake of their morning meal until they had instructed the children in the law. The Roman Church has always known its value, and is ever active in sowing her sacerdotal seeds. In the comparative freedom of the soil you get your opportunity. You may sow into these young lives the seeds of high ideals and noble thought and pure emotion. They are yours to claim for Christ and citizenship and the world. It is well to go to your work with the feeling of the poet who, looking on a little child, was inspired to write :



"O, thou bright thing, fresh from the hand of God,  
The motion of thy dancing limbs is swayed  
By the unceasing music of thy being!  
Nearer I seem to God when looking on thee;  
'Tis ages since He made His youngest star,  
His hand was on thee as 'twere yesterday.

Thou later revelation—silver stream,  
Breaking with laughter from the lake divine,  
Whence all things flow. O bright and singing child,  
What wilt thou be hereafter?"

The answer will largely depend on the kind of seed sown into the soil of childhood. It is receptive and rich and free.

Now, in relation to this "good ground," consider—

## II. THE CONDITIONS OF THE GROWTH OF TRUTH SEEDS ARE FAVOURABLE TO THE HARVEST.

There are two conditions:

### i. *The vitality of the seeds.*

All natural seeds contain the potency of life, and in a sense that is true of the seeds of truth. It is our duty to sow the seeds of religion and of the historic truths that cluster round the personality of Christ. But we must distinguish truths about Christ from Christ Himself. A religion without Christ may be a religion, but it is not Christianity; its distinctive feature is that it ceases to be Christian when Christ is eliminated. In a word, Christianity *is* Christ—not a creed, but a life. His personality is central to His religion. Hence always He makes Himself, not dogma, the object of saving faith. His key-words are, "Lovest

thou Me?" "Follow thou Me." The accent is laid on the teacher, and the reason seems clear. You cannot take a creed into your heart and love it with a deep human love. You cannot go into rapture over an abstraction. You cannot create passionate enthusiasm for a framework of ethics. But when a holy face gets into the frame, ah! then you are deeply moved. It holds you under the spell of its sweet compulsion. You can love and adore and obey. Teach, by all means, the ethics of Christianity: we need them every day for practical life and guidance, and for the flower of morality; but never forget that the rare fruit of spirituality only comes when Christ is received by the will and the affections into the heart.

Morality may come by rigid obedience to prescribed laws. Spirituality comes by love of a person, in which the spirit of the loved is assimilated. It is not enough, then, to teach the children about Christ; they must be led to *receive* Christ. "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." The seed of Himself, even in the life of a little child, is vital, and carries the potency and promise of the harvest. The second condition of the growth of the seed lies in—

ii. *Its external aids.*

In nature the sown seeds depend on the external aids of sun and shower. The root of every flower cries for the baptism of rain. And it is true of

the seeds of the Kingdom to say that they depend for growth on forces from without—*on the aid of the supernatural.*

Sometimes these divine energies come directly on the soil of the heart, but more often indirectly, through human means. But there is always this vital condition in the use of such means—*openness of being.* The souls used by the Holy Spirit must stand in this attitude; they must be open to the divine energies. The light must not only fall upon them, but pass through them. See this little fern in its mossy bed, with its fronds all closely curled, and the sunlight playing about it: out of pity for the fern, you say, Why fold yourself up? Why curl your fronds about you? The sun is waiting for you, and wanting to warm your heart,—why not let in the light? It will gently unfold you, and you will grow strong, and put out stems of strength, and sow seeds of fern life! The little fern in its mossy bed makes answer, I do not like the light. I will shut it out! You reply, Some light you need, and without it you will surely die. Open to the light, O foolish fern! And so, if we would be the media of God in blessing others, we must keep open to the divine energies. How often they play about us, and would enter us, and pass through us in blessing, but we fold around us the fronds of our own exclusiveness! The indirect method of God is to

bless others by what has been well called a "divine humanity." And this mingled personality is formed by the open nature receiving the energy of the supernatural. The divine mingles with the human, resulting in the formation of a new type—"a new man in Christ Jesus." "In Him man discovers the law of his life, and is at peace with himself. In Him man is united with his fellows in the glorious sonship of the sons of God. In Him man takes his place in the outer world to which he is so closely allied—a world which is not alien from the Word, but which He framed, and whose life comes from Him."

The spiritual man, joined on one side of his nature to heaven, and on the other side to earth, clasping his Father-God with one hand and his brother man with the other, becomes a vehicle of divine energy. It is clear that our Lord was absolutely open to God, and He is the perfect "divine humanity"—the mingled personality—through whom the supernatural energy streams over the field of human hearts. This surely is the indirect method; and if you would be a blessing to the children, you must keep yourself open to God. Let the Holy Spirit flow through you—the fertilising energy of the seeds you have sown.

You have heard of a land far away. In the heart of it is an age-worn river bed, in which the waters often fail. The banks stretch away, on

either side, into wide wastes. In season the sowers come and fling their seeds over the waste. Then patiently they wait for the rising of the river, and for its overflow. Yonder, where hoary mountains are crowned with snow, streams are leaping into silent vales; thence converging into the age-worn channel. Still the sowers are waiting! But see, the waters are rising, and overflowing and flooding the banks. Soon the tender blade shoots, and ere long the golden grain waves across the wastes of the Nile.

Thus, in our work, we depend on the external and supernatural. The Holy Spirit must descend on the fields of our sowing.

It may be that some of you have sown the seeds of the Kingdom on fields of unreceptive hearts, and others have sown into the "good ground" of childhood; but for all of us there must be the patient waiting. Our eyes must be lifted to the hills where God is and whence the streams flow. Then, some day, we shall learn, perhaps yonder, how, when we were called from the sowing, the river rose like streams in the desert, and the angels of God, all unknown to us, reaped a harvest of souls.

"He that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless return again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

## XIV.

### THE WAKEFUL SOULS.

"When they were fully awake they saw His glory."—ST. LUKE ix. 32.

SOME say that the Transfiguration was merely the effect of an Eastern sunset—a sensuous illusion; others say that it was a beautiful dream of the three disciples: but they all fail to explain the coincidence that three men should dream the same dream at the same time, and they overlook the fact, expressly stated by St. Luke, that they were "fully awake" when they saw His glory. And, again, others are of opinion that the Transfiguration was a poetical myth. Strauss would have us believe that it was modelled on the transfiguration of Moses; and Ewald concedes that it must have had some actual form, to which was added a mythical decoration. The reply to all these objections is, that they quietly ignore the circumstantial evidence of eye-witnesses and the fact that the glory of the occurrence made such a vivid impression on St. Peter and St. John that they never forgot it.

It remained with them all their life, not as a sensuous illusion or a beautiful dream or a poetic myth, but as a glorious fact which then and there was presented to their souls and senses. When years passed, and St. Peter was growing old, he still wrote and spoke of "the glory on the holy mount" as if the "after-glow" were still with him. It was a sublime experience.

The imagery used by the sacred writers to convey their impression is intensely vivid. St. Matthew says that His face shone as the sun; it was full of blinding light, and His raiment, literally, did "lightning forth," as if with flashes from some unseen glory. And St. Mark adds his own graphic touch when he says, "as no fuller on earth can whiten them," and compares His raiment to the gleaming purity of the snow. Sun and lightning and snow,—the most vivid imagery, especially in the orient,—are used to express the effect of the Transfiguration on their senses. When the imagery is combined, we get the impression of a sublime radiance, so powerful as to daze with excess of light.

Consider then—

#### I. THE GLORY OF CHRIST.

"They saw His glory."

It is clear that there was seeing along with perceiving. With mortal eyes they saw the visible radiance, and with spiritual perception they saw the invisible glory. They saw the Divine Figure

clothed with light, and His face a splendour: but was that the "glory"? No; it was only the effect: the cause was an inner radiance, a great spiritual emotion shining through the material form. Our body, while it conceals, also reveals spirit, and in moments of spiritual rapture the face is the mirror of the soul. Mr. Cook, in his "Boston Lectures," under the title of "Solar Self-culture," attempts to analyse this peculiar light which illumines the face of saintly souls. Quoting the lines in which Dante sees Beatrice—

". . . she smiled so joyously  
That God seemed in her countenance to rejoice"—

he observes: "This radiance ought to be by us, as it is by natural law, most searchingly distinguished from all lesser illuminations. Its specific difference from every other light is, that in it God seems to overawe beholders, and to rejoice. . . . The mysteriously commanding and glad light is to be distinguished from merely æsthetic or intellectual luminousness in the countenance by a peculiar moral authority, incisive regnancy, and unforced elateness, bliss, and awe. . . . The radiance cannot be counterfeited. The appearance and disappearance of the solar light in the face of a man are governed by fixed natural laws." He proceeds to show that there cannot be an effect without a cause, and argues that the cause of the solar light, or transfiguration,



seen in the faces of Moses and Stephen, and in seers and saints, is to be found in the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. I think we shall agree that this specific light is not æsthetic nor intellectual, but spiritual, and that the cause lies in the coming of God into a man. The degree of its manifestation will mark the degree in which God and the soul are in communion. It is written, "as He prayed" the fashion of His countenance was changed.

Now, may we not find in this some explanation of the revealed glory of Christ? Have we not thought of the "glory" as belonging to an order outside the range of human experience and peculiar to the proper divinity of our Lord? So we have missed its naturalness, and never have dreamed it lies in our power to get transfigured. What, then, was the "glory on the mount" filling the divine face with the "light that never fell on land nor sea"? It was the glory of goodness fired by emotion. It was the glory of the soul in rapture with God, filled with an emotion that glowed in His face like the sun. The materialist admits that an emotion will so affect the cells of the body that they become more translucent, but he leaves wholly unexplained the cause of the emotion. Doubtless he will say a wave of feeling surged over the heart of Christ. But what caused the feeling? We have seen that it came "as He prayed." It was the rising tide of God within.

"The fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily"; and He now realised more fully than ever the "God-consciousness," and so the inner glory brightened outwardly. It was the glory of pure and perfect goodness. But the goodness was fired by emotion. What emotion? Was it not the prospect of the cross—of doing His Father's will—of showing to the world a wonderful love that should redeem men? Yes; "This glory was no mere splendour, whether of earth or heaven, but the glory of love and the work of love,—the blessedness of carrying out the redeeming will of God, and bringing back to Him a world that had sinned and gone astray."

It was, then, the glory of pure goodness fired by the emotion of dying to redeem a world. The Transfiguration and the cross are closely allied. "From that time" He began to speak, always with reticence, of His sacred passion. Thus the "glory" was His goodness, fired by love in holy heat over the thought of what His dying would do for man—shooting flashes of light through the veil of His flesh and spreading a glory over His face. The "solar light" was soul light—the great gladness of sacrificial love.

"Can a mere man do this?  
Yet Christ saith this He lived and died to do.  
Call Christ, then, the illimitable God—  
Or lost!"

Now, the practical question is, How may we see

this inner glory of Christ? This brings us to the second consideration.

## II. THE WAKEFUL SPIRITS.

The Old Version gives the impression that the disciples, having slept soundly, awoke to the vision of splendour; but the Revised Version gives a clearer rendering—"When they were fully awake"—thus suggesting not that they had slept, but that they were only drowsy. The note in the margin is still more explicit—"having remained awake." The rendering suggests that the original meaning is that the disciples did not fall asleep, but, being drowsy, they kept awake, and when "fully awake" they saw His glory. It refers, of course, to the physical act of wakefulness and to sense-sight, but its spiritual significance is clear.

May I put it so—that the more "fully awake" we are in the higher zones of our being the more we shall see of the glory of Christ? The great lack of our day is a spirit wakeful to those beautiful facts and sublime emotions contained in religion. Some are all alive to the Stock Exchange, and fully awake to dividends; and others look to books, regardless of morals, that create a new emotion; and some are eager for recreations that excite nerve vibrations: but they are all drowsy, in spirit, towards the great and lovely things that stand outside the limits of the material. The sunlight lies far away on the mystic mountains, and there is none of its

pure light in their veiled eyes. The great ideals glimmer through the deep, and rarely touch the soul drugged to its death. In "The Vision of Sin" the poet shows how, as the neglected light slowly fades, the Nemesis comes creeping down :

"A vapour heavy, hueless, formless, cold,  
Came floating on for many a month and year,  
Unheeded."

The man while living was dying, for he had not kept wakeful to the light.

"God made Himself an awful rose of dawn"—

which called him to wakefulness, but sensuality cloyed the soul. It is so easy for all of us to fall into fatal slumber that we need to pray daily, "God keep me wide awake." Not to use the eyes of the soul in looking on "whatsoever things are lovely" is to lose them. Down in the deep of the sea there are creatures living in cold and darkness under great pressure. Once they were in the upper zones of light and warmth, but gradually they went down into the deep, and now they have lost their sight. It is always nature's penalty for abuse or misuse or neglect of any of her gifts—to take them away. What is true of the body is true of the soul. The man who sinks in materialism will go down through the zones of spiritual light and warmth, and grope in deep darkness; he will lose his eyes for the "solar light," and see no glory in Christ. Even

Mr. Darwin modestly admitted that he seemed to have lost the capacity for spiritual things. Doubtless, for all that, the Spirit of God was in the spirit and work of the great scientist, but it affords an illustration of the fact that neglected spiritual faculties are taken away.

Unless we keep ourselves "fully awake" we shall miss the "glory that excelleth." We have all, in a world like ours, material pursuits and sensuous recreations; but should we allow the spiritual life to sleep, we shall miss the light that is better than the sun. How, then, may we keep ourselves "fully awake"? The answer is—

*By careful attention to the higher nature.*

By attention to the *intellect*, that the mind may find its pure delight in thinking over again the thoughts of God.

By attention to *emotion*, that it be not wasted on unworthy objects, or degraded by unholy passion, but moved by high ideals of God and by those "visions holy" which redeem the soul. We must cultivate sensibility to nature, which is the poem of God, and a feeling for pure art, and in the hush of solitude we must feel our way into the mysteries, veiled to those who clamour at the gates. Thus emotion will be transfigured, and it will keep calm and clear.

By attention to *imagination*, that we train ourselves to soar out of the atmosphere of the sensuous

into the clear air of the spiritual—and yet higher, to dream of what life will be with God.

By attention to *conscience*, that naught shall brush off its bloom, or stifle its voice, or make it less sensitive.

By attention to *conduct*, which is the certificate of the sons of God.

If thus we give careful attention to all these sides of our life, we shall keep ourselves "fully awake." But there is one other essential: we must know the mystic meaning of the hidden life. "Your life is hid with Christ, in God." It is the life hidden in the sacred things of His love, and in the silences of communion with Him, that sees most of His glory. Hawthorne compares Christianity to a cathedral with painted windows: those who stand without see only a medley of design and a blur of colour; while those within trace the design clearly and see the colour vividly. Thus, the glory of Christ is best seen from within. Men who stand without ought not to express any opinion about Christ, or offer any criticism; they are looking at the cathedral window from without, and the glory is obscured. Only the life hidden in Christ sees His glory.

Yet again, we shall best keep a wakeful spirit and see the vision glorious *by loyally doing the lowly duties*. We often miss the vision because we shirk the duty that comes in the "daily round and

common task." We can be courageous in great things, but we are cowardly in little things. Then the veil falls, and there is darkness on Hermon. Let us not miss the vision of His glory in the gift even of a "cup of cold water."

You will recall Longfellow's "Legend Beautiful." The monk would find the holy life, and craved the vision of the blessed Lord. The vision came, filling the cell with light; when suddenly rang the convent bell, calling him to help some beggars at the gate. But should he go the vision might not tarry, and his heart grew clamorous.

"Should he slight his radiant guest,  
Slight this visitant celestial  
For a crowd of ragged, bestial  
Beggars at the convent gate?"

Conscience made answer :

"Do thy duty; that is best;  
Leave unto thy Lord the rest!"

He did his duty :

"When the Blessed Vision said,  
Hadst thou stayed, I must have fled."

To do His will in life's lowliest duty is to win some new gleam of His glory. If we would only be patient, and make the sacrifice of self and face our cross, we should find the pulses of a new joy beating within us, and we, too, might have a transfiguration.

And, lastly, the wakeful spirit comes *by the indwelling holy light*. There is the light of the Spirit of God within every man—"the candle of the Lord"; and should we keep the light burning brightly, it will not only keep our soul awake, but transfigure life. In Goethe's "Tale of Tales" we learn how the peasant's hut was changed into an exquisite temple by the magic lamp. "By virtue of the lamp locked up in it, the hut had been converted, from the inside to the outside, into solid silver. Ere long, too, its form changed: for the noble metal shook aside the accidental shape of planks, and stretched itself into a lovely case of beaten ornamented workmanship." So the hut became a temple: and thus, if the Holy Ghost dwell within us, "the body of our humiliation" will be fashioned after His glorious body. The lamp of the divine Spirit will shine through the human body, and make it God's beautiful temple. Pray for the "blessed inward light" that transfigures all life and duty, and makes a glory glimmer over some rugged cross.

"He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," for His cross was a glory.



## XV.

### THE FACE AND THE SOUL.\*

“And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door: and unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.”—GENESIS iv. 5-7.

WHY did God accept Abel's offering and reject Cain's? We dare not say that it was without reference to the merits of the men: for even a pagan philosopher once wrote, “It would be strange if the gods looked to gifts and sacrifices and not to the soul.” But some object that the firstling of the flock was designed as a type of the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” and that God would receive only such a type,—to which, reply is made that the Almighty is not so wanting in types that for the sake of setting up one type He would deal unjustly with another. All objections based on the nature of the offerings may be at once set aside. We shall find the reason for the acceptance in the one case and the rejection

\* A sermon for Young Men and Women.

in the other in the opposites of character. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we are told that Abel had faith and Cain had not. In modern terms, Abel was a theist, and Cain was an agnostic. The difference in the men explains the action of God. It was the spirit in which they sacrificed that gave the value to the sacrifice. It has been said that the best part of a sermon is the man behind it, and so the best part of these sacrifices was the character behind them ; and to God that was all-important.

But now I want to leave this discussion to look at a matter of special interest. The text frames for us the face of Cain ; and as we look at the face we see what a mirror it is of the soul : *Vultus est index animi*. And so our subject is the face and the soul as illustrated by the portrait of Cain.

I want to impress—

I. THAT SIN DEBASES, WHILE VIRTUE EXALTS THE FACE.

Cain, brooding over his rejection, cherished anger and jealousy, and his face fell. The fallen face was the outward sign of inward feeling. As the hands of a watch indicate movement within, so facial expressions show the mood of the soul ; and thus the outward reveals the inward.

Carlyle, in "Sartor Resartus," pictures the world in clothes. Our institutions and laws and fashions and houses are only clothes ; they are the out-

ward things by which we tell the inwardness of a people. And, in a literal sense, clothes often reveal the man : we all know a fop as a mere bundle of negations with artificial decorations. But it is equally true that the *body* is the clothing of the soul. The soul is dressed in this garment of flesh, so frail that the soul shines through. And it is evident that naught can conceal for long the hiding soul. What is a hypocrite but one who would hide his ugly self? But the effort to conceal is the very act that reveals. He may wear many masks, but somehow the real self cannot be hidden. Masks cannot always be worn, and the face will show the man. We get a picture of the loathsome character in "Sea Dreams" :

"I should find he meant me well,  
And then began to bloat himself, and ooze  
All over with the fat, affectionate smile  
That makes the widow lean."

Thus the face mirrors the soul. Now apply this first to vice.

The sin of a soul shows itself in two ways in the face. The casual sin is shown by fitful expressions, but the continued sin gets fixed in the face. Note these fitful changes, for they are indicators of changes within. See the sudden flush : it is the sign of guilt or the surprise of innocence. See the knit brow and the fierce look, and there we get

anger. See the curl of the lip, and we have cynicism. See the pensive face, and we get sorrow ; or the laughing face, and we have gladness. And so feelings get photographed.

Now, sin changes the soul, and the changes are portrayed in the face ; and should the sins by repetition become fixed habits, the face will often wear the image of the sin. It is self-evident that vice brings with it a low, bad look. Faces become portraits of souls. We see them, and we say, Here is a spendthrift, and there is a sensualist, and yonder is a drunkard ! The passion that stormed in the soul of Cain was blazed in his face. "Why is thy countenance fallen ?"

Thus evil, not content with its wreck of moral ruin, involves the fabric of the body. It blots the spiritual light out of the man's face, and covers it with darkness. It is no longer lifted to God, catching the glimmer of some high ideal ; but it is fallen—the eyes are downcast, and the face is shadowed. The fallen countenance of Cain means that God has gone out of it. Cain has cherished great anger, and conscience will not allow him to lift eyes to God. And so sin mars the face.

I read a strange story somewhere : it was the dream of a drunkard. In his dream there came to him a face, young and pure. It changed into the face of a man, but still the light of youth played about it. Then it changed into middle age,

and the light faded, and passed into a wintry gleam ; deep shadows and coarse lines were cut into the face, and the look was low and leering. Then it changed again into a face swollen and sodden ; and it came near and looked into the dreamer's face, and the shock awoke him, and he knew now he had looked into his own face, and it was a drunkard's. It means that the dreamer saw his real self : his soul was like that besotted face !

This is a terrible fact, showing the "secret sins" of life. They cannot be long kept secret ; the fixed habits of the soul get advertised in the changed countenance. And as identity lies in the spirit, and the spirit must have some kind of body after death, it is possible that character will get self-revealed there by showing itself on the fallen face. The hidden things will be revealed, and the vices of a soul will be read and known of all. In the countenance of Cain is imaged the hatred that haunts his spirit. And so vice pulls down all of the man, and God reads in his fallen face the fall of a soul.

But if vice degrades, it is also true *that virtue exalts*. The words are better rendered, "If thou doest well, shall it not be to thee exaltation ?"—that is to say, the lifting up of the face in contrast with the fallen look of conscious guilt. We have only to look into faces of pure souls to see the difference. The light which suffuses even a plain

face and makes it momentarily lovely is no earthly light. These faces of light carry a charm of which we never weary. We seem to look into pure depths of light, where no passion breaks the calm, nor trails a darkening shadow over the sunlit deep, and where no sin drops a foul blot into the crystal purity. Such souls are pure and calm, and, when imaged outwardly, we see the "human face divine." And even when the dear face fades, the portrait will speak of the beautiful soul that once looked on us, and we shall feel the pathos of those lines of Cowper on receiving his mother's picture—

"Oh, that those lips had language! Life has passed  
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.  
Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,  
The same that oft in childhood solaced me;  
Voice only fails, else how distinct they say,  
'Grieve not, my child, chase all thy fears away!'"

The poet could see the soul of his mother in the portrait. Now, what is this look of exaltation? What is the explanation of the beautiful face? It has always had a fascination for the poets, who have felt its significance, and never put its lovely light into the face of a bad man. Milton paints the devil; and though he spoils his picture by making him an object of attraction rather than repulsion, yet he is careful to keep that light out of the face of the fiend, and in place of it paints a brooding horror, like the gloom of Cain.

“Satan . . . dilated stood,  
Like Teneriffe or Atlas, unremoved.  
His stature reached the sky, and on his crest  
Sat Horror plumed.”

Now see Dante paint an angel, and the portrait  
glows with this strange light, giving beauty to the  
face and sublimity to the figure:—

“Another of those splendours  
Approached me; and its will to pleasure me  
It signified by brightening outwardly,  
As one delighted to do good:  
Became a thing transplendent in my sight,  
As a fine ruby smitten by the sun.”

And once more—when one of our own poets tries  
to think of God, it is of this light, mystic and most  
wonderful, of which he sings—

“Oh, light, so white and pure,  
Oft clouded and yet sure!  
Oh, inner radiance of the heart,  
That drawest all men, whatsoe'er Thou art!

\* \* \* \* \*

What matter by what name  
We call Thee? still art Thou the same.  
God call we Thee, or Good.”

It is evident that in the opinion of the poets the  
light of exaltation, both in human and angelic faces,  
must be ascribed to goodness; and their opinion  
is confirmed by Scripture, whenever, as in the case  
of Stephen, it gives a portrait of an angel's face.  
“God's glory smote him on the face,” and God's

glory is His goodness. The explanation lies simply in being good. The beauty of God within shows itself without, and the good souls get beautiful faces. Dean Stanley once took a dignitary of the Church to see Samuel Martin; and the dignitary said, "You have shown me the face of an angel!" It was a lovely face; and goodness made it lovely.

"Shall it not be to thee exaltation?" When God comes into our life it brightens outwardly. The glory of the transfigured Christ was the outraying of pure goodness. And yet, when we look upon the faces of men, how few are touched with the light that comes from God! It was Dean Church's lament when he wrote: "Watch the faces which hurry past us in succession in the crowded streets. Made in the same type, varying infinitely one from another, face after face disappoints, if it does not repel or shock; face after face tells with dreary uniformity how far, even outwardly, men are short of their ideals; face after face passes, each with its story and purpose of life marked on it,—but how little in the vast procession does the eye see of gladness and hope! how seldom does the charm of expression promise to make up for what is otherwise wanting!"

What is it that is wanting? It is an inner life, where God dwells, where the Holy Spirit is enshrined, and where Christ is an abiding Guest, that is wanting. Then the face would grow beautiful in



its long, loving gaze on the Guest. It is there that men are "wanting"; and as a result we rarely see on their faces the light of the pure and high ideals. Even to look to the beautiful would give some beauty, and to the great would make for greatness. Let us begin by cherishing some one great thought and doing some one good deed, and perchance that holy light will kindle within and send out a radiance.

Victor Hugo, in "Jean Valjean," shows how life gets transfigured by sacrifice. The story of how Valjean saves his enemy, Marius, by carrying the senseless man through the sewer, points to those high ideals that reflect God's light within the soul. "He rose, shivering, chilled, befouled, bending beneath the dying man, all dripping with slime, his soul filled with a strange light." It is in doing some deed of pure sacrifice that we feel the glow of Christ within and get a face of glory without. But is it not love that makes for sacrifice? Yes, the greatest thing is love. To know how to love is the lack of the passing faces,—to love God and all the men and all the things He made. If only men loved, they would be exalted, for "love greatens and glorifies all things."

The words that Cosette found beneath the stone are golden words for the guidance of life, and if the hurrying lives would only pause to read and write them deep in memory and heart, a new light would come into their faces.

“The reduction of the universe to a single being, the expansion of a single being even to God,—this is love.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“To love is the only thing which can occupy and fill up eternity.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“Woe, alas! to him who shall have loved bodies, forms, and appearances only. Death will take all from him. Try to love souls. You shall find them again.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“You who suffer because you love, love still more. To die of love is to live by it.”

And what a picture that is of Nansen, on the great snowless ice-fields of the Arctic, dreaming of love, and writing in his diary—“Love is life’s snow. It falls deepest and softest into the gashes left by the fight, whiter and purer than snow itself. What is life without love? It is like this ice, a cold, bare, rugged mass, the wind driving it and then forcing it together again, nothing to cover over the open rifts, nothing to break the violence of the collisions.”

The trinity of goodness, sacrifice, love, dwelling within, glorifies life and sends the Angel Beautiful into the gloomy face: “Shall it not be to thee exaltation?”

Now further observe—

II. THAT SIN WEAKENS, WHILE VIRTUE STRENGTHENS THE SOUL.

“If thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door,” and sin always weakens.

God would have Cain on his guard, and so he is

mercifully told that if he do well, God will accept him. The infinite mercy broods over the man, to cool his passion and prevent his crime. Then he is warned that a sin already is couching, like a wild beast, at the door of his heart, and soon may leap within the cave of being. But he is told to rule over the sin. If Cain had heeded the warning and set a watch, he might have been saved from an awful crime ; but he was heedless, and evil entered and paralysed all the better nature. The metaphor suggests this paralysis of the moral sense by cherished evil. Some animal pursued takes refuge in a cleft of the rocks, when the beast pursuing couches there, awaiting the prey. Its very presence there strikes the victim with paralysis of fear. And it is so morally : when we allow some sin to couch at the door of the heart, the knowledge of its being there, while we are not trying to drive it away, will weaken our every moral fibre. Then, when off our guard, the evil will take possession, and, like Cain, we shall work out our moral madness. Once let evil into the cave, and the danger of "deadly doing" is great.

What, then, is the lesson ? Surely not to allow sin, however small, to couch at the door of the heart. We are not nearly in such danger from great sins as from "little sins." It is the little things that often grow to great. The rivulets cut a way for the mountain cataract, and lo! a deluge. The snowflakes get frozen into avalanches, and lo! destruction.

Beware of little sins!—they are only the “early callers.” At Sierra Leone a little white ant crawls to a door. But the master despises the ant, and it enters the house; and soon other ants follow—a colony of ants. They eat their way into chairs and couches and tables, secretly and silently. And one day there is ruin in that house,—the furniture falls to pieces, and the doors and the windows are honeycombed; the heart has been eaten out of everything, all because the careless occupier let one little ant into his house. We say, “only a little sin.” Yes, but a host of sins will soon follow, to eat out our moral life and leave naught but ruin. If we are wise we shall be on the watch for the “little sins” that couch at the door.

But you say, Only this once. It is not a great sin. Let me open the door to it! Just that toying with the “pleasures of sin” has strangled in the end the moral life of many a youth. The pampered sin comes again to couch at the door; but no longer is it feared as an enemy, but played with as a friend. In a word, sins repeated become in time habits, and habits are the “hardened skin” which folds itself about the better nature, and slowly chokes out its life.

A story is told of a sailor who out of mere bravado caught a serpent by the nape of the neck and played with it. But slowly and surely the reptile wound itself about his body, coil after

coil, until in sheer weakness the man let go. Still the reptile coiled around him ; when at last the great coils circled his throat, and life was choked. Substitute sin for serpent, and we get a realistic picture of sin strangling virtue. It not only weakens, but destroys, our moral life. "The soul that sinneth it shall die" is the changeless law. Sin is always murder, not for Cain only, but for every soul cherishing sin. The mission of sin is to kill, root and branch, the life that looks to God.

But the text gives us the converse, and suggests *that virtue strengthens the soul.*

"Unto thee shall be his desire." Sin would fain destroy the man. But God says, "thou shalt rule over him"—that is, the sin. Virtue alone is strong to rule ; and if Cain only chose to do well, he might grow strong. In the degree in which we are virtuous we are manly, strong ; and to be strong we must get the pure heart and the approving conscience. We may have a strong mind and a strong nerve and a physical courage, and yet fail in the battle we have to fight. The foe that couches at the door attacks the spiritual side of us, and can only be met by spiritual weapons. Only a soul panoplied with the might of God is strong to rule.

I would speak to you earnestly. You are out in the battle of life, and your higher nature is assailed by subtle evil. There is only one way known to experience by which to become victor, and that is

by having the strong soul. And the soul is made strong when it solemnly vows by divine grace to follow Christ, and submit to His will, and fight His battles. You know how in the great hall the knights kneel and swear allegiance to Arthur—to do his will and obey his word ; then the strength of Arthur seems to pass into them,—

“Beyond my tongue to tell thee—I beheld  
From eye to eye, thro’ all their order flash  
A momentary likeness of their king,”—

and, strong in his strength, they went to battle. It is a beautiful symbol of submission to Christ, as King, and the infusion of His strength into kneeling knightly souls. “We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” Are you in despair because of the sin couching at the door or of the sin which may already have entered ? Then you need not despair, for there is no evil which cannot be driven out and away by the expulsive power of love to Christ. Will you pray to Him, and think on Him, and look at His wounds, and kneel at His cross, and gaze until love kindles within you and you say, “Lord, give me Thyself” ? Then Christ will flash His strength into you. I know your sorrow and often despair under the tyranny of evil ; but I know that there is strength in Christ before which evil quails and slinks away. “But this kind can come forth by naught but prayer and fasting.”

There is a way of starving evil out of the soul, when with the victory will come, not only the strong soul, but the transfigured face. "Shall it not be to thee exaltation?" The new nature will show itself, as the gloom of sin dies out of the face, in growing gladness. It may not come as soon as you could wish, for it is a growth of goodness from within, and takes, with all great things, the slower way of growth—but it will come like the gladness of spring.

You know how in nature winter comes and the winds carry away the falling leaves, and the trees stretch bare arms, and there seems only a grave, and the old things are swept into it. Then spring comes—a new life, like a young angel, stands by the grave, and as if by magic calls out flowers and grass and buds and many forms of beauty.

"She comes! The loosen'd rivulets run;  
The frost-bead melts upon her golden hair;  
Her mantle, slowly greening in the sun,  
Now wraps her close, now arching leaves her bare  
To breaths of balmier air."

Thus are you to die to self; and the Holy Spirit, breathing, will carry away all the dead things into the grave of the dead self. As in nature, so in grace, death will be the parent of life, and the spring will come,—that beautiful spring, when the loveliness of the ever-young life of God clothes the soul!

## XVI.

### THE HARPS OF GOD.

" . . . Having harps of God."—REVELATION xv. 2.

THE book of Revelation is a book of visions and symbols. St. John was a mystic, seeing God in things both great and small. Such souls find within, in every wistful yearning and tremor of gladness,—those "children of the mist"—the presences of God; and, without, they feel in the waving air the breathing of the divine, and see, in the colours of the setting sun and in the beauty glimmering over the sleeping sea, the glory of the veiled God. The mystics believe in souls much more than in bodies, and when souls are awake they know the Great Soul who lives, not alone in the thrilling moments of human passion, but in all those faint impressions and shifting shadows and dim images that haunt the spirit of man. To ordinary mortals these carry no signs, but to the mystic they are the signals of God.

"The little more, and how much it is!  
The little less, and what worlds away!"



As Maurice Maeterlinck says, "Our lives must be spent seeking our God, for God hides ; but His artifices, once they be known, seem so simple and smiling ! From that moment the merest nothing reveals His presence ; and the greatness of our life depends on so little ! Even thus may the verse of a poet, in the midst of the humbler incidents of ordinary days, suddenly reveal to us something that is stupendous. No solemn word has been pronounced, and we feel that nothing has been called forth : and yet, why has an ineffable face beckoned to us from behind an old man's tears ? why does a vast night, starred with angels, extend over the smile of a child ? and why, around a yes or no, murmured by a soul that sings and busies itself with other matters, do we suddenly hold our breath for an instant and say to ourselves, Here is the house of God, and this is one of the approaches to heaven ? " \*

St. John was evidently of the mystic type of Maeterlinck, at least, in his clear vision of God behind the veil of nature and within the world of spirit. God was hidden only by the film of things ; but as

"Star to star vibrates light, may not the soul  
Flash through a finer element of her own ?"

The "Apocalypse" is an unveiling of that which a

\* "The Treasure of the Humble."

soul sees by spiritual intensity and vivid subjectivity ; it is a mystic's insight into spiritual realities, which he bodies forth in material forms. St. John sees the redeemed as if on a crystal sea. The crystal is meant to make vivid the purity and freshness and transparency of the divine life. The sea is the symbol of divine fulness, and the crystallisation suggests the solidarity of the life of heaven. The mingling of fire expresses the sacrificial flames of the martyrs. The victory won over the "beast" doubtless refers to the refusal of the Christians to worship the emperor. The mark, or number, of the "beast" suggests the custom of branding the imperial slaves either on the forehead or on the hand ; it became the sign of anti-Christian citizenship. The "beast" may be taken as the symbol of the sensuous and the carnal, and points to the grossness of the imperial feasts ; and for us it may signify the latent evil of humanity. We are half animal and half spiritual, and he who would come up to the pure crystal sea of divine life must win the victory over the lower self. St. John sees the victorious redeemed "standing by the glassy sea, having harps of God."

Our subject is—

#### THE HARPS OF GOD.

It is a beautiful symbol when taken in its mystic sense, but too often spoiled by literalists. What, then, do the harps mean? They are the symbols

of the harmonies of the heavenly life. We often speak of the divine nature as rhythmical, and by that we mean the moral harmonies of God. His nature is so delicately attuned that no discord mars the music. The perfect God must be purely harmonious in the working of His own being. Our own distractions only serve to make clearer the balance of the divine nature. Evil has flung some delirious discord into our music ; our reason wrangles with our feeling, and our judgment quarrels with our conscience. We are evidently not yet the tuneful harps of God. But it would seem that the heavenly redeemed are God's harps ; they are attuned to the divine harmonies. And when we think of harps or any other instrument, we associate with them a musician. The instrument is only a capacity for music, and it needs the musician to put the music of his own soul into it ; and ever he brings out what he puts in. Thus the redeemed are harps, and *God is the musician* : what He puts into them, they give out. Now, that music should be the symbol of what He puts in is more suggestive than the symbolism of poetry or art. In "Fra Lippo Lippi" Browning shows that God puts something into the artist which He would have the artist express : "Art was given for that." In "Sordello" he speaks of the power of the poet in bringing to the light deepest feeling, and says, "Poets know the dragnet's trick." But in "Abt Vogler" he yields the

palm to the musician, and thinks he is so much nearer the divine as to catch the whisper of the eternal:

“God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear;  
The rest may reason, and welcome,—’tis we musicians  
know.”

Again, in “Paracelsus,” when the poet Aprile wants to show his love for man, he says he will call in music :

“I would supply all chasms with music, breathing  
Mysterious motions of the soul, no way  
To be defined save in strange melodies.”

The idea seems to be that music expresses more of the essence of things than any other art. Was it not this that Jean Paul Richter felt when he exclaimed of music, “Away ! away ! Thou speakest to me of things which in all my endless life I have not found and shall not find” ? Doubtless Richter has found them now in the harmonies of the divine life.

And, again, the literary artists, when they want to tell us of that highest life, can find no purer symbol than music. Olive Schreiner, in her “Dreams,” takes us to a mountain in heaven, on the summit of which a great man is working ; he had come up from lowest deeps of pain to the high places of delight.

“ And I saw the figure bend over its work, and the light  
from its face fell upon it.  
And I said to God, ‘ What is it making ? ’  
And God said, ‘ Music.’  
And He touched my ears, and I heard it ;  
And after a long while I whispered  
To God, ‘ This is heaven ! ’ ”

Heaven is the life of eternal harmonies best told in music. When, then, we think of the redeemed souls as harps of God, and God as the musician, we think of something He puts into them that they may give out. The harps would be useless without the musician ; but should the harps tremble into music, must there not be a player ? John Henry Newman asked that same question : “ Can it be that these mysterious yearnings of heart, and keen emotions, and strange longings after we know not what, and awful impressions from we know not where, should be wrought in us by what is unsubstantial, and comes and goes, and begins and ends, in itself ? It is not so ; it cannot be.” It is God who whispers. If true of us, how much more of the redeemed who are close to God ! The heavenly harpists may well borrow the language of the poet, and say, “ We musicians know.” What is it they know ? What is it that God puts into them and they give out, that makes them “ harps of God ” ? God puts into them the harmonies of His own morally rhythmic being, and these are the whispered music which the harpists give out.

Let me speak, then, of some of the harmonies of these living "harps of God."

i. *There is the harmony of life.*

We think of Deity with all powers so delicately balanced and with all qualities so attuned that nothing from within disturbs the equilibrium or spoils the harmony. In relation to itself the Divine life is never broken in its peace by any of those regrets that make the rift in our lute. What God has done or permitted, from the time the first angel caught His breath and lived until now, is wise and good. God makes no mistakes; there is never a fatal flaw in His reasoning, and never a false note in His feeling, and never a painful discord in the rhythm of His action. God acts with absolute wisdom, inspired by pure love under the sway of rigid holiness, and so His being moves harmoniously in all its parts. Thoreau feels how music is the art best expressing the harmonies of the Divine life when he writes: "Let us hear a strain of music, and we are at once advertised of a life which no man has told us of, which no preacher preaches. . . . There are in music such strains as far surpass any faith which man has ever had in the loftiness of his destiny. . . . I think of that everlasting something which is not mere sound, but is to be a thrilling reality. What, then, can I do to hasten that other time, or that space, where there shall be no time, and where these things shall be a mere living part

of myself: where there shall be no discords in my life?"

The wistful yearning of Thoreau is satisfied only in the perfect music of the life of God. There the heavenly redeemed are "harps of God" because they give out the harmonies of the life of God. His being mingles with their souls as if in blending music. One pulse beats, one energy impels, and one sense of rapture thrills, every life; for "God whispers," and they feel the music. They are not lost in God as "the dewdrop slips into the shining sea"; but they retain a sensitive identity to the breath of His Spirit; and, for them, that music of the harmonies is a life of pure gladness, into which no sorrow sends a poignant note and no pain quivers into the pure melody. Into the music of the life of God our friends in Christ have gone, and they are harpists on whom He breathes. And we? Ah! sin has flung its discord into our being, and spoiled the music. Our harp is broken; but if we bring it to the Musician, He will mend it, and whisper His music.

Again—

ii. *There is the harmony of will.*

As God is a moral being, His will is moral. He can only will the true and the beautiful and the good. His changeless moral will gives fixity to the moral order. When opposed to God's will, we fall into moral discord, but, accepting His

will, we come into the moral order. In heaven all redeemed life is keyed to the will of God. They are "harps of God" because they give out the music of blended wills. The finite many are attuned to the infinite One. They have no will but the will of the holy Father, and they respond as sensitive instrument to the touch of skilful player. Just to know and do what God wills makes the heavenly life as "the music of many waters." Thank God for "our loved and lost awhile" who live in those holy harmonies where sin never more makes shuddering discord, and self never again spoils the music, and grief never trembles on the lips of pure song! Their souls are harps swept by the breathing of God into symphonies of blended wills. Yet they are not lost to us: there are great moments when our distracted being is harmonised, as if a "lost chord" had wandered down from the choir invisible into our discordant life.

"Choir invisible

Of those immortal dead who live again  
In minds made better by their presence,—live  
In pulses stirred to generosity,  
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn  
For miserable aims that end in self,  
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,  
And with their mild persistence urge man's search  
To vaster issues, . . .

. . . This is life to come."



Again—

iii. *There is the harmony of thought.*

God is infinite thought. All beings and things are God's thoughts. The universe of matter is only the sheath of the Divine thinking—the form of the thought. God is always and everywhere immanent. The planets, sweeping on their solitary ways, and all of suns and stars and systems gleaming through space, are thought-forms. Every flower that wears the colours of heaven on its petals, and every child carrying the look of mystic wonder in its eyes, is a visible thought of God. As one philosopher truly says, "God's thoughts become things." And does not our life even here thrill with gladness when we grasp some of the thoughts of God in Christ or man or nature? As Emerson says, "These are always attended by the emotion of the sublime. For this communication is an influx of the divine mind into our mind. It is an ebb of the individual rivulets before the flowing surges of the sea of life. . . . A thrill passes through all men at the reception of new truth." To know the realities is the craving of the soul; and all truth is reality. The soul was made for truth, not falsehood; and the soul knows, and when it thinks God's thoughts, the divinity stirs within it.

But what must be the rapture of the heavenly victors who are dwelling within the harmonies of eternal thought! "It arches over them like a temple,

this unity of thought, in which every heart beats with nobler sense of power and duty." And with what delight they pass along the ascending scales of the ever-evolving thought of God, from elemental matter on to the first throb of precious life in the infinitely little, and on to the crowning of man in the ultimately great!

"How know we or can trace  
The first beginnings of all time,  
Who know not yet indeed how this our race  
Rises to heights sublime?  
In darkness does our life begin,  
Hidden and fenced within."

"Now we know in part, but then shall we know. . . ." Then shall we know that never a discord troubled the Divine thought as God conceived the vast plan of the making of worlds, and the birth of spirits into matter, and through matter back again to God,—

"That what began best, can't end worst,  
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst."

Again—

iv. *There is the harmony of feeling.*

God is not only will and thought, but feeling; and feeling in the Divine nature blends with will and thought into harmonies. No conflict ever rises between these to mar the music. The being of God is a symphony, and feeling takes its ordered place. What, then, is feeling in God? God is pure love, with never a note of self; loving His creations

with holy love, and seeing the evil that wrecks His fair realm, yet never taking away the love that redeems man. In the vision of the seer the crystal sea is the image of this pure, white love of God. And more : God is pure, self-giving love. The Divine life is a life of sacrifice : it gives itself away to all creation, and is the secret of the ordered worlds and of the beauty that hides beneath the veils of things ; it gives itself away to every life of trembling weakness, that it may lead it up into conscious strength. As Whitman sings :

“All forces have been steadily employed to complete and delight me.

Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul.”

Because God loves, He creates. Nature is the overflow of soul, not soul the overflow of nature. Because God is the perfect Artist, He delights in His art. Because God is beautiful, He makes beauty, and He is never more the blessed or happy God than when He gives Himself to His creations. But ever God's love is holy love, and, while it gives itself away, it is never blind to the imperfections of the loved ; it sees every stain and flaw of life, but these it comes to cleanse and mend. If God were holiness alone, He would blot out every unholy life. But love works with holiness for our redemption ; and so God, hating the sin, can love the sinner. Now, recall life's delicious feeling when

first you knew God, and loved as a son. Did not the flush of that love seem to you the dawn of all beautiful things? Even natural love brings a glory into life. "No man ever forgot the visitations of that power to his heart and brain which created all things new, which was the dawn in him of music, poetry, and art, which made the face of nature radiant with purple light, the morning and the night varied enchantments. . . . Nature grows conscious. Every bird on the boughs of the tree sings now to his heart and soul: the notes are almost articulate. The clouds have faces as he looks on them. The trees of the forest, the waving grass, and the peeping flowers have grown intelligent." So beautiful is natural love! But spiritual love is beautiful with the beauty of God. To it the loveliest things are within the soul, the beauties of holiness. When the soul begins to love, ever so little, as God loves, then peace begins to be. And why? Because divine love unifies life, and the once discordant faculties make "one music." But think of the heavenly redeemed who have passed into similarity of feeling with God, and love with self-giving, holy love. Are they not rightly called "the harps of God" in the harmony of feeling attuned to His? To love as He loves gives the rhythm of celestial life. Into such souls no jarring discords break.

I have spoken of the harmonies of life and will and thought and feeling in God. Yet, once more—

v. *There is the harmony of action.*

To will and thought and feeling we must add action. All God's actions are harmonious. "God is the perfect Poet, who in His person acts His own creations." But there was one supreme act by which the harmonies of heaven got voiced on earth. I saw the cathedral of Cologne, with its majesty of strength softened by delicate lines of beauty, recalling the fine saying, "It is frozen music." Now Christ on earth is God's living music; He makes actual for us the harmonies of the divine nature. "He whose intellect overarches us in the vault of stars, whose beauty rests on the surface of the earth and sea, embodied His affections and His will in the person of the Son of man." Is not this the charm of Christ that ever draws men as if by sweet compulsion? There is never a conflict between mind and heart or will and conscience, but always agreement. It is a character perfectly attuned, and is so different from the distracted lives of men! The holy harmonies are vocal in Christ, for His was the life of God on earth. His character is best expressed by the subtle meanings that lie in the word music. And His message carries with it all the charm of His character. All His words to the weary lives are infinitely tender with the soothing of music.

Whenever Christ comes He makes in the soul a unity; He unifies life by love, and it moves to the

music of its own reconciliations. The soul knows the coming of Christ into its discords by the magic of His harmony.

“Thou shalt know Him, when He comes,  
Not by any din of drums,  
Nor the vantage of His airs;  
Neither by His crown,  
Nor His gown,  
Nor by anything He wears:  
He shall only well-known be  
By the holy harmony  
That His coming makes in thee.”

“I went,” says Paxton Hood, “into a German church in one of the old quaint cities of the Middle Ages, as twilight was falling over the buildings, to hear an organ. It began to utter some marvellous delirium of music. It imposed on the imagination the whole scenery of a wild tempest, a storm of nature among heaths and mountains. The thunder rolled near and far among the crags. The rain hissed in the winds. The flash of the lightning went by you. The storm possessed and overwhelmed you. Then, I will tell you what came. I had never heard it before. I thought it was a human voice. Amid the hurricane on the organ it rose so clear and calm and ineffably restful!—so high over the surges and the wailing of the rain, and the thunder and the wind! It was the ‘vox humana’ stop—that wondrous simulation, the human voice stop, the mightiest marvel of all the artifices of music!

The storm continued ; but still it sang on, and rose on the wings of light and sound—over all the hurricanes that hurried from the pipes and the keys. Then I thought of the one human voice stop in time. . . . Amid the crash of kingdoms and thrones and peoples and opinions, amid panics and horrors and fears and travails, One Voice, and only one, has been heard—high above those lower regions where the tempests have their home. ‘It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth’ who hath spoken to us by His Son, the voice including every human chord—‘Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’” Will you listen to that music or heaven? The perfect life of harmony is to be found only in Him. He reconciles all the contradictions of our being in the divine harmonies. Let it be our ambition to become “the harps of God,”

“And perchance at last,  
God willing, this dumb lyre and whispered voice  
Shall wake by love inspired to such clear note  
As soars above the stars, and, swelling, lifts  
Our souls to highest heaven.”

## XVII.

### THE GLORY OF THE CROSS.

"Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory?"—LUKE xxiv. 26.

THESE words were spoken to two sad and lonely men by a Stranger who had joined them. They were disciples of Christ who cherished the hope of a conquering and not of a suffering Messiah. They were sad because of the tragedy ending the earthly life of Jesus and their hopes. It is possible they had witnessed that amazing crime of man, the crucifixion of Christ: they had seen the cross and heard the clang of the hammer; they had watched the pallor steal over the holy face, and had seen the lips move in prayer, and then had come away in despair, saying, It is all over! We hoped it would have been glory, but it is shame! So they felt and talked, doubtless, on their way to Emmaus, when the Stranger drew near. He listened patiently while they poured out their sincere grief; and then, instead of sympathy, He gave them gentle reproof for their reading of the prophets.



The prophets had spoken of a suffering Messiah, it is true, but always of glory through suffering. The two disciples, hoping for the glory of a redeemed Israel, partly ethical and partly political, never dreamed of a glory coming by a cross of shame, until the Stranger, who was the Lord, tells them it was this glory the prophets had predicted: "Behoved it not the Christ to suffer, and to enter into His glory?"

The two related thoughts are the suffering and the glory. It is not of the glory of heaven He now speaks, but of a glory associated with suffering—the bitter root that should yield a beautiful flower.

Consider—

#### I. THE SUFFERING THAT MAKES FOR GLORY.

A close study of the attitude of our Lord towards His cross shows a secret sense of rapture. He looked to the cross not as a means of loss, but of gain, as if it held something for the world, the glory of which made the suffering bearable; it was that which gave Him calm and strength. Once the battle won in Gethsemane, and all the suffering was crowned. Pilate was amazed at the serenity of Jesus and His utter indifference to what he might do or say. At the heart of His great sorrow was the awakening joy by which "He endured the cross."

We must not think of Christ as facing Calvary with only a bowed head of shame and a drawn face of

pain : if we watch Him closely, making due allowance for the physical shrinking, and not forgetting the moral pain, we shall find the signs of an inward gladness, as of a secret sense that the glory to be revealed by His cross would glow over all the sorrow, and transfigure it, as the sun the clouds. "Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross."

Now that seems to be the gospel portrait. But how differently we have drawn the face of Christ ! With the Divine figure we have associated, both in theology and art, only the one idea of suffering on which no glory glimmers. The Christian Church, absorbed in the "worship of sorrow," dwelling long and devoutly on the physical and moral suffering of the Redeemer, has lost sight of His secret joy—the pulse of rapture within the heart of pain. There can be little doubt of the influence of art on theology. It is true that the Christians, up to the time of Augustine, refused to admit any images or pictures into the churches ; but this was because the pagans degraded art by making it the symbol of their gods and goddesses. The Christians, protesting, said, If we have pictures and images, what better are we than idolaters !

Julian had charged Christianity with opposition to art, whereas the opposition was, not to art, but to its degradation. As a matter of fact, Christianity and a crude form of art were closely allied in the

catacombs, where we get the earliest specimens of Christian art. Now it is interesting to ask what teaching about Christ, as reflecting the mind of the early Christians, do we get on the walls of the catacombs? It is significant that we find Him portrayed as the "eternal youth," beautiful with the ageless life of God; or we see Him sitting among the disciples, calm and glad as He voices the Divine wisdom; or we see Him as the shepherd, tender and strong, carrying in His arm a bleating lamb. On all those sacred walls is the flush as of a great gladness. It is the face of a glad Christ which looks down from those mural drawings. Never once do we find the realism of a later time, giving us the portrait, with which we are all so familiar, of unrelieved agony. This, as Dr. Fairbairn has shown, is the product of the art of the Middle Ages, and is the result of suffering men, who, taking refuge in monastic houses, transferred their own misery to the Christ, and worked into their thought of His cross the dark colour of their own joyless life. As a result, we find in almost every church on the Continent pictures of gruesome realism, in which only long-drawn agony looks out of the eyes of the holy Sufferer.

There can be no question of the influence of such realism in art on a growing theology. Our theology was so deeply coloured with the shadow of grief as to neutralise the light of joy. It is

evident that nearly all the theology of the Atonement copies the art of the Middle Ages in its portraiture of unrelieved agony ; yet all the while it is written of our Lord that He went to the cross with joy pulsing at His heart and with a knowledge of the greater glory, veiled for a moment by the great suffering. We must try so to fill in the lights and shadows that the face of the holy Sufferer shall show more of light.

Let me speak, then, of the suffering that makes for glory under two aspects.

i. *Sympathetic suffering.*

Edmund Burke wrote, "Sympathy may be considered as a sort of substitution by which we are put into the place of another man and affected in many respects as he is affected." In that altruistic sense Christ was intensely sympathetic. He, the greatest, had the power of all great natures. He could flash His Spirit into other lives, and feel the pulse of their joy or the shock of their sorrow. And so we find Him, now at a wedding, mingling His smiles with those who rejoiced ; and now at a grave, mingling His tears with those who wept. He seemed to see, as if by substitution, with other eyes, and feel with other hearts, and know all the hidden springs of human joy or grief. But why could the Master feel with such quick sensibility ? Because He was tempted with us in all points, and yet without sin. The unsympathetic man is he who

has never been tried and never suffered deeply. It is the fierce temptation which is defeated, the fiery trial which is endured, that gives the fine quality of sympathy; and should the soul win the victory "without sin," while it will ever be fierce against the evil, it will be tenderly sympathetic toward the sufferer. Christ came out of the "crucible of pain" as He went into it, without stain of sin; and so His sympathy was no maudlin sentiment which makes excuse for sin, but was that finest quality that can loathe the evil and yet love the evil-doer. And what a power of gentle compulsion it has over human hearts! You will recall that picture in "Robert Falconer," in which Falconer, sitting in the midst of a little company, reads the story of the Magdalene. "Some one sobbed again. It was a young, slender girl, with a face disfigured, and, save for the tearful look it wore, poor and expressionless. Falconer said something gentle to her.

" 'Will He ever come again?' she sobbed.

" 'Who?' said Falconer.

" 'Him—Jesus Christ. I've heard tell, I think, that He was to come again some day.'

" 'Why do you ask?'

" 'Because,' she said, with a fresh burst of tears; then, recovering herself, and as if finishing her sentence, put her hand up to her poor, thin, colourless hair, and said, 'because my hair ain't long enough to wipe His feet!'

It is a delicious picture of the power of Divine sympathy over human hearts. But we must not forget that the pure, fine sympathy of Christ involved Him in suffering. All loving souls enter into the life of others, but for Christ, with such a heart to love and with such a mind to analyse, the suffering of sympathy lies far beyond our experience.

“Think of all the sin He had to contemplate with the redeeming pity of God ! And Jesus went through life with this terrible, agonising, analytic power. Think what it meant of passion ! think what it meant of pain, when He saw that even in redeeming man He gave man occasion to sin the more ! Was it surprising, then, that He should say, ‘Oh ! I cannot drink of this cup : it is the cup of the blood of the souls of men ’ ? And especially at that last scene on the cross, that supreme moment when, as it were, time was carried to a single point, was it surprising that He should feel this agony ” ?

But now it is urged that Christ need not have suffered ; He courted death ; He might have lived a quiet country life, and have died a natural, peaceful death, respected as a rabbi ! Yes, He might ; but at what cost ? Suppose a political leader, fighting for social reforms and meeting with opposition, said, I will retire from the struggle and live in peace ? At once you are angry, and the word “Coward !” leaps to your tongue. You say, He has betrayed his cause, and for the luxury of

ease flung away his principles ! And you would not be wrong. No great cause, of truth against error, and principle against expediency, and purity against corruption, was ever won by a leader lapsing into selfish ease. Those who made the "great refusal" were thrust by Dante into "fiery pits." The leader must be willing to make sacrifice ; and it has been the lot of many a man whose eyes were fixed on great ideals to give his life. We owe, to-day, the freedom of our race, and our civil and religious liberty, with our precious heritage of truth, and all of best and noblest in our national life, to the men who died rather than yield.

"Thoughts that great hearts once broke for  
We breathe cheaply in the common air ;  
The dust we trample heedlessly  
Throbbled once in saints and heroes rare,  
Who perished, opening for their race  
New pathways to the common place."

Then, never say that Christ need not have suffered. Believing what He believed, and teaching what He taught, there was no other way but to face death. If He had gone back to His home among the hills, He might have won selfish ease, but it would have been at the cost of truth and progress and redemption. It behoved Christ to suffer, and it was the suffering of holy sensibility to the sins and sorrows of man. In no other way could His cause triumph but by endurance even unto death. It is always so ;

and none of us who work for social or moral reforms must ever think we can escape our cross.

“The victories of right  
Are born of strife ;  
There were no day were there no night,  
Nor without dying, life.”

The sufferings of our Lord show themselves in another aspect.

ii. *Sacrificial suffering.*

I have been trying to show that some of His sufferings came because of His sympathy with man, blinded by error and cursed by evil. One so pure and fine in His sensibility could not but be sympathetic. But now another aspect shows itself in the Redeemer's suffering. There was the relation of sin to Himself. It is written, significantly, “He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” And surely there is no other way? He put it away from His life, making it impossible by the sacrifice of self. It is the self that the sin clings to; and when the self, by its own will, sacrifices itself and tears away the clinging sin, then the self is saved. What awful evil powers, even in “spiritual places,” must have haunted the soul of Christ and tempted Him, with subtlest alluring, to escape His cross! To have yielded would have been to sin; but He sacrificed Himself. For Him it meant a dual sacrifice of body and spirit, as an object lesson that we are not to shrink from the one nor the other if



we would put away sin. We have so long thought of the cross of Christ as a substitution for us as to forget our identification with it, and that we, too, are called to a crucifixion. But not so St. Paul: "I am crucified with Christ."

There is another deep note in the sacrificial suffering, found in the struggle of Divine love trying to express all of itself through human limitations. Christ felt that the body which He had taken, while revealing, yet concealed, and that the love stored in the body was far greater than the body could express; and so there was ever the suffering in spirit of a love that could not, because of its limitations, get fully told.

And still we find a deeper note, when we realise that such a heart must have drawn to itself, as to a focus, the miseries of man. Christ loved the race, and its pain must have pulsed in great throbs through Him; there must have been moments of intensity when the horrors of the world were focussed in red rays of quivering pain in His heart.

Then we come to the deepest note: that unknown region of His suffering, which is ever veiled; that tragic moment of His passion, when He prayed the prayer of *transeat calix*—"let this cup pass." As we know not the ingredients of the cup that caused so great a shuddering, we cannot analyse the suffering. Even for us there are moments of agony, when the soul slips down into a darkness of which we cannot speak; but for the Saviour of

men it must have seemed as if that deep were fathomless. Was it that He tasted man's sin in the cup, and felt stung in His pure soul as if by the fang of a serpent? He never told any one: Divine grace is slow to speak of its own sacrificial suffering. And yet His unknown sorrow was not without some compensation: God sent an angel into Gethsemane; and the swooning Christ saw the coming glory on the angel's face, and revived.

When we try to think of these varied aspects of His suffering, we almost forgive the art that left no gleam on the face of the Sufferer; it would seem as if the grief must blot out all the gladness. And yet there was that secret joy at the heart of it: "Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame." Theology and art have missed the joy, or else we should have had a portraiture of "glory gaining on the shade." But now the face is beginning to show itself with sorrow brightening into joy:

"That one face, far from vanish, rather grows,  
Or decomposes but to recompose,  
Become my universe that feels and knows."

We are seeing with growing clearness a light shooting through the darkness. The face is not all in shadow: "With the clearest perception of human suffering there was always combined in Him the consciousness of knowing a great light

and a saving name. His speech was not the mere word of a human being, but the tide of the everlasting love itself as it rolled in and broke upon this bank and shoal of time. . . . It was not all darkness; for, as one of the Fathers has written, He died in the risen sunshine of God's name, every cloud flying and the clear sky returning."

Then consider—

## II. THE GLORY THAT COMES BY SUFFERING.

"Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory?" What glory? Evidently it was not a far-away glory, but near, and associated with suffering. We may glean something of what the glory was when we keep in mind the object of His coming. We shall then find that the glory of His cross, which was His joy, was twofold.

### i. *God was expressed.*

"God is Love." But how show such love to man? Christ is the answer of God. He paid His visit to earth to show us the Father in His character and teaching. As the Holy Son, He was the "likeness" of the Father, and gave us the image of His character; and as the obedient Son, He made it clear that such a Father is worthy to be loved. But the cross would commend God's love in its sacred passion; and the glory of it was this, that, by the cross, God, in eternity,

would be shown, in time, as the heart of suffering love.

“Come, then, complete incompletion, O Comer!  
Pant through the blueness.”

But do you ask, Why should God want to come? The answer surely is, that, apart from the sinful need of man, which called for Divine intervention, the highest nature must of necessity show itself. Holy love, like genius, cannot be concealed. In “Pictor Ignotus” we get a painter who thought he was a genius and could paint wonderful pictures, if he liked.

“Never did fate forbid me, star by star,  
To outburst on your night with all my gift  
Of fires from God.”

Then, if fate were so kind, why not use his power to flame out on the world? Because he objected to his paintings being put up to auction, and vulgarised. So he would hide his genius in the “endless cloisters” and the “sanctuary’s gloom” by painting there.

“So, die my pictures! Surely, gently die!”

The mistake of the artist was in thinking that genius could be hidden. Not even the gloom of the sanctuary nor the walls of the cloister would conceal the painter’s genius. It would flash there on the mouldering walls, and all men would know the “fires from God.”

What is true of genius is true of love. Love will find a way of showing itself. And so we begin to see, from analogy, how God's love will get itself revealed. It took a wonderful way of its own ; and yet it is difficult to think of a way more fitted to the need of man than the Incarnation and the Atonement. The nature of God, which is Love, always silently suffers in the suffering of man ; but there was that one point in time when it got visibly shown in the death of Him who declared the Father.

We begin now to realise the glory of Jesus in His suffering, and to find the pulse of the secret joy that hailed the cross. The cross would show to men the character of the " veiled God," and His lapsed sons would come back to their Father. So, by every pain He bore, He was entering into His glory, and the hard agony was softened by the knowledge that He was showing men how God loved. He knew that His suffering would be short and sharp ; but the glory of God, unveiled in time, would be for ever and for all men, and so His joy was greater than His sorrow.

"What lacks, then, of perfection fit for God,  
But just the instance which this tale supplies,  
Of love without a limit ?"

Surely this was the glory of the cross ! And as the dying Saviour saw the vision of the future, and the home-coming of His brother men through His sacrifice, He must have felt a deep, calm joy in the

heart of His sorrow. And there, too, was heaven above, awaiting Him. "There were worlds on worlds, sphere beyond sphere, which held on their way more surely as the hour of His final triumph drew near. The plains of heaven were glowing in a more vivid sunlight, the harps of heaven were swept to a more exulting strain. The great ones of the past put on their glorious forms, and pressed through the veil to greet Him. The very dead beneath the sods in which the cross was planted stirred as His footsteps pressed them, and, bursting from their tombs, prepared to join the train which He would lead up on high!"

Again, in the glory of His suffering—

ii. *Man was redeemed.*

What is sin but distrust of God? And what is redemption but the power that leads man back to trust? And what is the power but the love of God which Christ came to show, so clearly, by His cross? God always meant man to be redeemed. Man was made in his moral nature to be the friend of God; and redemption, which is the way of reconciliation, means on the side of God sacrifice and love, and on the side of man the contrition that leaps in response, crying, "Abba, Father!" Through all the ages God had been sacrificing Himself for the redemption of man; but it would seem as if man needed some visible object to awaken the slumbering soul within him, and so God sent His "only-begotten Son" and

the cross of holy pain into the world to show to the senses of man His redeeming love. When man, in the agony of His sin, finds that love, he will know God and be redeemed. Love is the one redeeming power. "Is it not wonderful and beautiful that it is to this life of love that God is redeeming mankind by the sacrifice of Himself? It is this life of holy, self-denying ministry which He came down to live among us, to reveal to us as the eternal life wherein is the perfect and perennial bliss. The philosophers see in all ages that love is the power which helps and heals; and God has kindled, by the breath of His own great love, the fire of this holy life on all the sacred altars of the world. His redemptive work brought it down from the spheres of ideas to be a living, practical power."

What is it that draws the prodigal home? It is more than a selfish want; it is the pull of the father's love. We are not saved by fear, but by love. Fear separates, but love unites: and such is the power of the cross of Christ; it is the symbol in time of God's eternal love, by which man is drawn up out of his lower self into a sweeter, purer life. And so, because our Lord knew that the cross was the best way of showing the Father's love to men, and that by it they would be redeemed, He entered into the glory of suffering, and for the joy endured the cross—a joy that brightened o'er all the sorrow, like the splendour of some sunset falling on the

deep, dark waters in a glow of glory. Thus the Christ, in every man drawn to God, enters afresh into His great gladness.

Oh, blessed Lord of the cross, we would put our arms about Thy pierced feet, and kiss them with the kisses of love, and gaze into Thy glorious face ! We cannot see into the deeps of Thy sorrow or scale the heights of Thy glory ; but when we feel the agony of our sin, we feel the need of Thy cross. Take the darkness from our eyes, Saviour of the world ! To know Thee ever so little is to be made great.

"No one ever plucked  
A rag, even, from the body of the Lord,  
To wear and mock with, but, despite himself,  
He looked the greater and was the better."



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17 sermons.

1. Sermons, English. I. Title.

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